

Crossing Civic Frontiers

How Norway promotes democracy in North-West Russia

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Abbreviations

BEAR	Barents Euro-Arctic Region
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ENGO	Environmental Non-Governmental Organisation
MFA	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NUPI	Norwegian Institute of Foreign Affairs
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

1. Crossings in the High North

This thesis will be a journey through civil societies and High North policies in search for links between democratic development and cross-border cooperation in the Barents Region. Through qualitative analysis based on questionnaires, interviews and documents I will be investigating connections between the democratic goals of Norway's High North policy and civil society development in the Russian part of the Barents Region within the 2000-2007 timeframe.

In this introductory chapter, the path of study opens up through defining the fundamental research question. After that, the definitions and conceptualisations needed to navigate will be presented, followed by basic theory that connects the two main concepts of the guiding question: civil society and democratic development. In chapter 2 I will present an overview of Russian civil society history, Russian political elite understanding of democracy, and generate three hypotheses from theory on foreign involvement in Russian democratic development through civil society funding. Chapter 3 contains an overview of prior and current Norwegian High North policy in relation to Russia, while chapter 4 is dedicated to the research strategy. The main qualitative analysis of questionnaire and interview data will follow in chapter 5. Finally I will reach some conclusions to the main research question in chapter 6.

The aspect of stability has remained central in Norwegian foreign policy after the Cold War, although the basis for this focus has changed drastically from politics of deterrence and reassurance to widespread cooperation. Providing stability in northern Europe continues to be the highest aim of the High North policy and of regional bodies of cooperation, like the Barents Euro Arctic Region (BEAR) cooperation. On the current cooperation agenda are in particular potential development of oil and gas resources, fishery management, nuclear security and other core relations that connect Norway with its main cooperation partner in the High North, the Russian Federation. Part of the

Norwegian stability and cooperation strategy is devoted to attempts of influencing the political system in Russia in order to consolidate the kind of inclusive democracy that Norway prefers in a neighbouring nuclear power. Ideas of democratic peace and stable cooperation seem to correlate in contemporary Norwegian High North policy.

During the past years Norwegian High North policy has developed a broader, bolder and economically stronger form. The High North strategy of the current government is heavily promoted to Norwegian voters and foreign allies alike, and verbal involvement in Russia's domestic affairs seems to increase as the federation's centralising policies become more internationally criticized. What is being done to stabilise the Barents region, except for direct bilateral appeals and collegial conduct? Is strengthening democracy enhancing forces in the region important for this overall goal? I am convinced that it is, and in this chapter I will explain why.

1.1 The guiding question

I wish to find out how the stated Norwegian objectives of cooperation in the High North concerning Russia's democratic development are being realised. Based on the premise that Norway does indeed seek to promote democratic development in the Barents region, I will try to answer the following question:

How does Norwegian democracy promotion influence the advocates of democratic development, in the form of civil society organisations, in North-West Russia?

Norwegian democracy promotion is here defined as the official Norwegian funding of projects to civil society organisations (CSOs) that aim to develop democratic values through civil society activity in North-West Russia. *Official Norwegian funding* is defined in chapter 3 as part of the Norwegian High North policy. Other terms in the research question also need clarifications, including what is meant by *democratic values*, *civil society*, *CSO* and *North-West Russia*. Let us begin with the latter.

1.1.1 Definitions

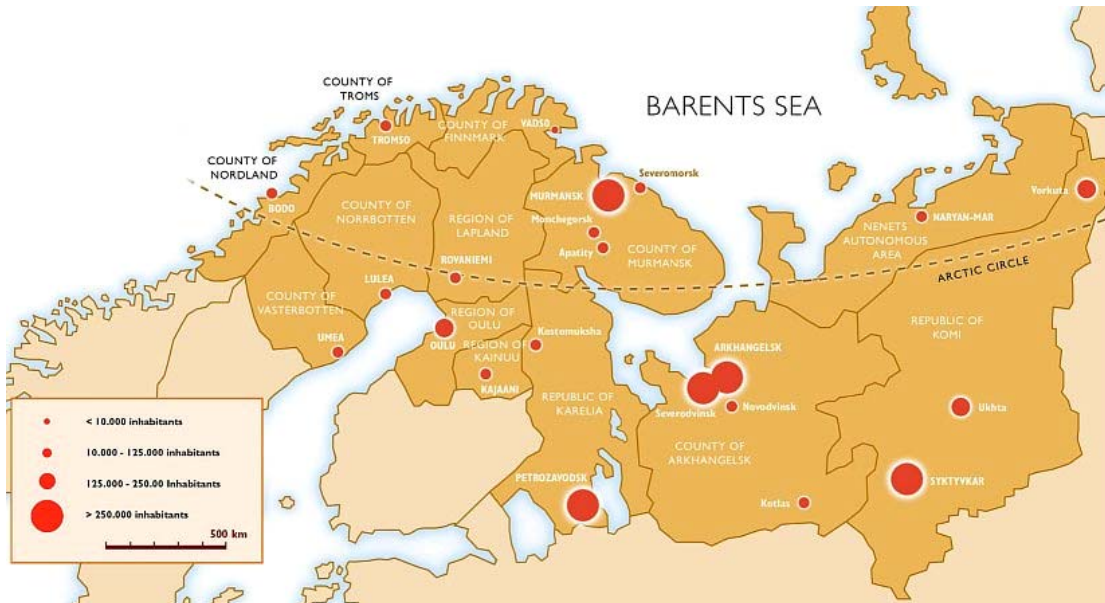


Figure 1.1 Map of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.

Source: Barentsinfo 2007.

There is a need to specify the geographic definition of the area in question, given that there are several official definitions of *North-West Russia*. The official Norwegian understanding includes the Russian part of the BEAR, i.e. Murmansk and Arkhangelsk *Oblasts* (regions),¹ the Republic of Karelia, Nenets Autonomous *Okrug* (district) and the Republic of Komi (Barents Secretariat 2006, Blakkisrud and Hønneland 2001). The Russians define North-West Russia as the North-western Federal *Okrug*, which also includes the oblasts of Vologda, Kaliningrad, Kirov, Leningrad, Novgorod and Pskov, and finally the city of St. Petersburg. In my research I will employ the term according to the official Norwegian definition.

¹ When I write about the oblasts I use the name Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. When I refer to the cities, I add "city". Arkhangelsk city and Murmansk city are the administrative centres under the jurisdiction of the oblasts with the same name.

The term *CSO* reaches beyond the more common Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), and includes organisations, associations and foundations that are not necessarily labelled “NGO” by Russian official standards. Russian practice provides a multitude of names and abbreviations for groups that operate in the civil society sphere. By using *CSO* for all of them I simply indicate that the civil society actor in question is an organised non-governmental, non-profit group. I will use the term *NGO* when the organisation in question labels itself as such, is registered with the authorities as such, and when referring to literature on NGOs. The *CSOs* under scrutiny in my guiding question are operating with goals related to developing civil society or promoting such goals by the character of their work. Usually such organisations advocate the interests of specific groups or subjects in the local society or in the region.

Democratic values are here defined beyond the minimum democratic principles of rule of law, representative government, and political freedom to participate in the political process by voting in and/or running for open and free election. Included in this definition are also extended values of liberal democracy, i.e. personal liberty to think and act without government control, and equality in the sense of equal rights to the same treatment regardless of ethnicity, sex, religion, heritage or economic status etc.; in brief the rights listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 2007).

A clarification of the term *civil society* is furthermore necessary to elucidate the content of the guiding question. The close connection between democracy and civil society is widely acknowledged in the literature on democratic development and foreign democracy assistance to such (e.g. Carothers 1999, 2006, Diamond 1999, Howard 2002, Linz and Stepan 1996a, Putnam 1993). Civil society is the platform on which the *CSOs* operate, albeit with great variation in form and intention, and they interact in various degrees with state and business actors. What the term *civil society* tries to capture and what its relationship to democracy might be, is explained in the following theory section.

1.2 Exploring the concept of civil society

Civil society is a notoriously tricky term to define. It is not an equivalent to society as a whole, but certainly a part of it. It does not have a concrete shape, but it is made up of active actors who publicly ‘express their interests, passions, and ideas, exchanging information, achieving mutual goals, make demands on the state and hold public officials accountable’ (Diamond quoted in Freres 1999:45). There is agreement on civil society being a sphere of public activity by citizens outside the two institutional complexes of market and state, although it interacts closely with both of them.

Classical liberal theory especially focuses on the relationship between civil society and government, and considers the government to be a community’s agent and provider of governance. Civil society according to classical liberals is thus the community that delegates authority to the government as well as the body within which the ultimate authority lies (Scalet and Schmitz 2002:27). In this way, the term captures *everything* but governance: businesses, schools, unions, clubs, media, religious organisations, libraries, charities, families. In short: ‘all non-governmental forms of organisation through which the community’s members relate to one another’ (*ibid.*). Such a definition is not very helpful for my research, since it shares no common features beyond the non-governmental. It is necessary to narrow the term down considerably, keeping democracy development in mind.

Civil society is often defined as ‘the third sector’, the non-governmental organisations that operate in the civic sphere between the state and the economic agents. It might seem simplistic to narrow civil society down merely to CSOs, especially when it has been shown that more complex networks of civic relations are important to the democratic aspects of civil society (Carothers 1999, Putnam 1993, 1995). Robert Putnam (1993) came up with the term ‘social capital’ after a study of different regions and civil societies in Italy. Social capital is not synonymous with civil society, but there are close links between the two concepts. Social capital covers ‘features of social organisation, such as

trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions' (*ibid.*:167). Building social capital thus becomes practically the same as strengthening civil society through creating CSOs, improving the capacity of CSOs, aiding their network building, and supporting their civic education activity – which facilitates more public participation in everyday democracy (Freres 1999:46).

The social capital thesis argues against reducing definitions of civil society to merely politically relevant CSOs. According to Putnam, overall levels of social trust, networks and norms that facilitate cooperation are much more important factors to the development of civil society than the direct political relevance of associations. Putnam (1993) even goes beyond organisations and points out that activities not related to organised membership, such as newspaper reading and open forum debates are just as important to social capital as NGO-activity.

Why should I then choose to interpret the concept 'civil society' in the narrow sense of organised civil society activity? I choose to do so firstly because an alternative focus on social capital would create a measurability problem, since the social capital concept covers such a wide range of non-organised activities as well as the more measurable CSO-activity. Finally I choose to focus on CSOs for the reason that CSOs are essential in the study of civil society's importance to democracy development. This is especially pertinent as vital channels for foreign investments are presently being made in developing democracy in Russia.

1.2.1 Civil society and democracy

If the population turns completely passive and just lies on the couch and eats popcorn, then democracy will be dead. (Martinussen 2007 [interview])²

² English quotations from documents, speeches and interviews in Norwegian are based on my own translations throughout the thesis.

The young environmental NGO (ENGO) activist who expressed this connection between civic activity and democracy shares an idea with most of the civil society researchers referred to in this introduction, namely that ‘the strength of the civil society sphere and the health of democracy are closely related’ (Rossteutscher 2005:242). Christian L. Freres (1999) connects civil society with the development of a more complete, ‘consolidated’ democracy through two channels creating mechanisms for greater citizen participation in the democratic process. In the first channel civil society can be strengthened through CSO activity of various kinds. In the second channel governments can adopt policies allowing new groups a good enough income to have a minimal level of participation. CSOs can be part of the second channel as well as the first, if they are consulted by the government on policy matters. My research question is geared towards tracing foreign influences on this process; thus I will focus on the first channel, which opens up for foreign influence on the mechanisms described in figure 1.2.

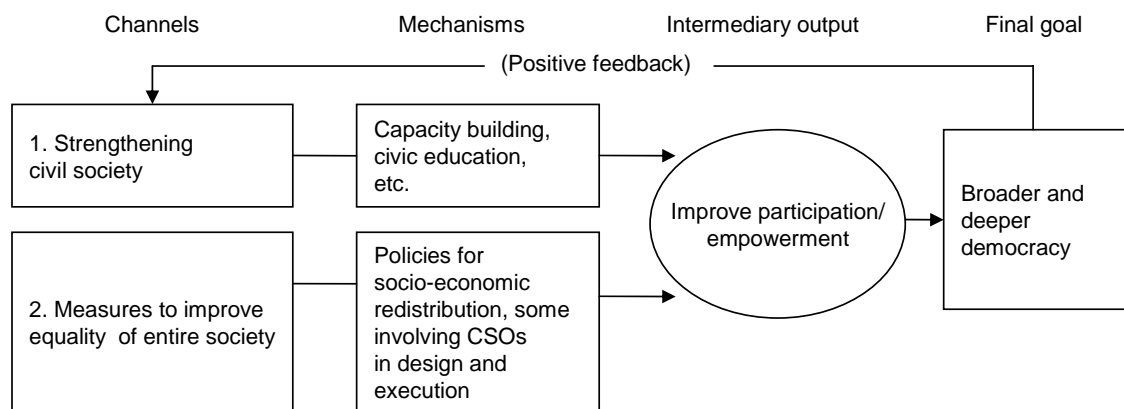


Figure 1.2 Freres' two channel model for 'democracy distribution'.

Source: Freres 1999 (45, table 3.1)

Putnam (1995:75) connects the idea of civil society and democratisation to countries where democracy has not yet been deeply rooted. Even though his thoughts on the subject may be getting out-dated in this rapidly changing world, they still refer to core post-communist democratic difficulties: 'The concept of "civil society" has played a central

role in the recent global debate about the preconditions for democracy and democratization. In the newer democracies this phrase has properly focused attention on the need to foster a vibrant civic life in soils traditionally inhospitable to self-government' (*ibid.*).

A significant feature of civil society in the development of democratic values lies in the actions it takes towards the political sphere and the state on behalf of the public groups it represents. Strong citizen organisations provide channels for popular interest as well as act as a check on the government when it comes to rule of law and human rights. In addition, organisational activism provides alliances for reaching common goals. Networks and collaboration in civil society are crucial to the possibilities of actual influence on politics and democratic development (Linz and Stepan 1996b). Putnam (1993) even argues that dense infrastructure of groups is the key to making democracy work. Civic groups and democratic stability are according to Putnam connected in two ways: internally, civic groups inspire cooperation, solidarity, public spiritedness and trust. Externally, the group networks aggregate interest and articulate demands in order to ensure the government's accountability. The importance of CSOs and CSO-networks emerges from these lines of thought.

Although, as mentioned, there is an overall agreement on a relationship between civil society and democracy, there is still discussion about the direction of causality between the two phenomena. Does civil society influence democracy or is the path in fact opposite, from democracy to civil society? It can be argued that the connection goes both ways; e.g. Freres (1999) includes this mechanism as 'positive feedback' in his model just described in figure 1.2.

A two-way argument is that with more democratic freedom, there is more room for civil society development. And conversely, with more civil society development, there is a greater force working for the conditions of a healthy democracy; influencing politics by pressuring the government and putting subjects of interest on the political agenda. The

influences between civil society activity and democracy seem to be in constant flow back and forth, and so it is more appropriate to speak of correlation between the two than a direct causal connection. If there is no democracy there can be no free civil society activity, and if civil society is lacking, democracy is but a mere shell of its potential.

1.3 Chapter summary

This introduction has presented the guiding question that this thesis aims to answer. Key concepts, such as geographic limitations, CSOs and civil society, have been clarified by providing definitions and developing a basic theoretical framework. What the concept *Norwegian democracy promotion* might contain is left for the third chapter on Norwegian High North policy and cooperation with Russia. Civil society theory presented in this chapter aims to shed light on the manifold content of “civil society” as well as to point out the narrower approach that this thesis will be taking to the term. Especially relevant for the coming analysis is the connection between civil society and democracy, which has been briefly discussed above. In the next chapter this theory will be put into the context of Russian civil society and democracy development, and foreign involvement therein.

2. Russian civil society

We lost the social capital – and now we must restore it on a new base. Money seems to be everything now, but we need something else. (Elena Kruglikova 2007 [interview])

Russia is considered to be a particularly illuminating case for the study of civil society development and foreign actors' role in such (e.g. Henderson 2002, Mendelson 2001, Sundstrom 2006) because Russian civil society basically started from scratch around the time of transition from authoritarian rule in the late 1980s. It thus becomes easier to measure effects of foreign actors' involvement in the development of a fresh civil society.

Russian civil society is furthermore considered to be fundamentally weak, mainly due to the Soviet regime's tactics of "flattening" society (e.g. Evans 2005, Linz and Stephan 1996a, McFaul 2001). Independent forms of political and social organisation were strictly prohibited and eliminated, and diversity of opinion was not an option in most of the Soviet Union's existence. Hence post-Soviet civil society suffered from the setback of more than seventy years of systematic repression. This is the main explanation to why Russia differs from many other third wave democracies³ when it comes to the role of civil society activity in the new regime (Sundstrom 2001:3).

A number of historical and contemporary explanations are important when the role of CSOs in Russia's democratic development is to be outlined. In the first part of this chapter I will examine essential historical and political aspects of Russian civil society. In the second part I will outline some theoretical aspects on foreign funding of Russian civil society actors, and ultimately suggest three main hypotheses that will guide the further data collection and analysis.

³ The term "third wave democracy" first appeared in Samuel P. Huntington's work *The Third Wave* (1991). Huntington defines the third major wave of democratisation as the transition processes beginning with Portugal in 1974, including the post-Soviet and East European post-communist states.

2.1 A third sector emerges

The first CSOs were established in RSFSR at the end of the 1980s, in the time of Mikhail Gorbachev's reform period known as *perestroika*; the reconstruction policy of economy and society that had stagnated under Leonid Brezhnev's leadership (Hanley *et. al.* 1995:646). Of most importance for the new CSOs were Gorbachev's other large initiative, i.e. the glasnost politics of societal changes towards a more open society. The old communist regime, where all public flows of information and legal organisational activity were under state control, would soon after collapse.

History does however show the origins of the first Russian non-governmental, non-profit organisations in the citizen rights groups that formed already at the end of the 19th century. These voluntary associations provided badly needed services in the Tsarist state, especially during the First World War, but gradually disappeared after 1917 with the Bolsheviks' suppression of independent social organisations.

A shorter historical line of origin – more relevant to the contemporary CSO-definition – goes to the dissident movement (the illegal opposition) and the informal cultural underground groups in the USSR (Skvortsova 2000:17). These groups were loosely organised and united mainly because of their opposition to the regime, and so they had little representative value for any specific group in Russian society. With their loose organisational structures and fluid memberships, most of them disappeared after the end of the Soviet regime (Sundstrom 2006:4, 28). Parallel to the dissident groups, there were also legal organisational life outside of the party and labour movement in the USSR. These were defined as 'voluntary citizen organisations', of which the prime example is Soviet Red Cross. As everything else, these organisations were also part of the state structure (Skvortsova 2000:17).

Stronger civil groups' initiatives came with the new political situation, in the aftermath of a wave of protests with mass demonstrations and meetings. Informal groups with semi-

political agendas also came together in the late 1980s.⁴ Political parties and CSOs arose from this civic wave and from the opening of the borders to foreign democracy assistance dressed as CSO-funding.

2.2 The insecure 1990s

After the regime change and the new freedoms of speech and organisation, the Russians did not turn out to be the people of civic activists that many observers expected. Why was this so, even after such a promising beginning of new civil society activity of both domestic and foreign CSOs in the 1990s? To arrive at an answer one must go through the decade of fresh beginnings, hopes and great deceptions that constituted Boris Yeltsin's presidency against the backdrop of a 'triple transition' (Offe 1996).⁵ In such transitions, comprising not only democratic-, but economic- and state transformation as well, it is common that civil society demobilises in some degree (McFaul 2001:321). As Alfred B. Evans points out, the general weakness of civil society in post-communist Russia would become obvious during the 1990s. To clarify the reasons for this development, it is helpful to divide the events affecting civil society into three categories: cultural, economic and political (Evans 2005:102,103).

The *cultural legacy* from Soviet times still affects people's attitudes toward voluntary associations that seek social change. Soviet 'opportunistic individualism' is connected with the population's division of Soviet society into two spheres – the private relationships of trust and true helpfulness, and the public sphere of mistrust where self-interest prevails (Evans 2005:102). In the first sphere personal networks and contacts

⁴ The most significant of which was to become the human rights organisation Memorial. Another important representative of such early activist initiative was the Moscow Helsinki Group (Sundstrom 2006:28).

⁵ Russia faced the problems of what Claus Offe (1996) describes as the 'triple transition' from communist rule to liberal market democracy, namely the transformation of politics (democratisation), economy (marketisation) and the nation state. Russian transition challenges were based on the three major transition dimensions of political democratisation, economic deregulation and state decentralisation in a federal system (Gel'man and Steen 2003:1-2).

were also a way to obtain benefits or to avoid going through formal procedures. This was important and positively associated in a society characterised by material scarcity such as the USSR, and the phenomenon even has a Russian word – *blat* (Skedsmo 2005:28). In such relationships of mutual gain in exchange of favours there is an element of trust in deed important for civil society networks, but at the same time excluding of networking on a larger scale. ‘The new Russian individualism’ of the 1990s can be seen as a direct continuation of this Soviet ‘opportunistic individualism’ (Evans 2005:102).

Russia’s *economic depression* during the 1990s, with the dire crisis in August 1998 when the state in reality went bankrupt, is the basis of the economic explanation for the weak civil society. The small Russian middle class that had emerged after 1991 suffered severely after the financial collapse. As the middle class traditionally has been the main participants and financiers of civic organised life, this had grave consequences. Civic engagement was something people could not afford, even if they wanted to. In stead, former leaders of the democracy movement groups took on jobs in government or business (Evans 2005:103). The wealthy oligarchs did to some extent take over the role as financier of civil society groups after they had made enormous fortunes during the corrupt privatisation of Russian State assets under Yeltsin, but frequently this patron activity had an opportunistic edge.

Politically, the dissident organisations had accomplished their goal of overthrowing the communist regime and did not redefine any further purpose in the new society. Even Democratic Russia, the prime mass democratisation movement behind the regime transition, did not succeed in adapting to the new realities and convert itself into a ‘party-like organisation’ (Flikke 2006:8). A main factor that contributed to the political failure of groups like Democratic Russia was the ambivalent policies of political leaders like Yeltsin (Linz and Stepan 1996a:377-378). On his way to gain power, Yeltsin benefited from the support of Democratic Russia, but he did not want to lead it as a party or even help it to become a party. Instead he put the role of the President above party politics and

appealed to his superior democratic legitimacy over parliament based on his direct presidential election. This 'anti-institutional style of presidentialism' (Linz and Stepan 1996a:396), together with the prioritising of economic reform before democratic state building and liberalisation before democratisation, weakened the institutionally based democracy in the new Russian Federation. As a result the underdevelopment of political parties between 1991 and 1993 made civil organisations disconnected from state politics. After the parliamentary elections of 1993, when the parties began to achieve more influence and play a more substantial part in state politics, the cleavage between political society and civil society became obvious (McFaul 2001:322).

Despite these factors that all have had negative influences on the civil sphere, new CSOs kept popping up during the first half of the decade. Women organisations, ENGOs, soldier's rights groups, and many other kinds of organised voices were represented in the CSO community. Social and health-care related issues became part of the CSO repertoire later on in this first period, when the state saw the benefits of having the CSOs take over many of the tasks that the old regime had managed on social areas. The CSOs got more established during the second half of the 1990s and they became more involved in public decision making (Skvortsova 2000:19). After 2000 the slight headway in the CSO sphere was set in reverse, and CSO activity was once again put under firm state control.

2.3 Tightening control after 2000

Even though the authoritarian state control disappeared with the transition to a democratic regime, a state with far more control over civil society and institutions than is found in liberal democracies continues to characterise Russian society today. After Vladimir Putin became president in 2000 he has initiated restrictions on organised civil life and taken control over democratic development and society's development in general, for instance by decreasing pluralism in mass media, limiting independence of regional government, and intimidating oligarchs to support his politics. International criticism of the Russian

style democracy is frequent and can be quite harsh; e.g. the Freedom in the World Survey for 2006 rates Russia 'not free' (Freedom House 2006a).

Tight state control does not seem to worry the average Russian too much, though. In fact, Russians tend to regard the state's regulation of organisational life as positive. A Russian opinion survey from 2006 on knowledge of and attitudes towards NGOs (Russian Analytical Digest 2006:9) shows that 67 % of the participants believed that the financing of NGOs, from both foreign and Russian funds, had to be monitored.

Despite popular disinterest and scepticism, the CSO sector has indisputably grown during the last two decades, although it seems difficult to say with certainty to what extent. According to the state statistical bureau *Goskomstat* there were 484,989 non-profit organisations registered in Russia as of 1. January 2000. However, only 20-25% of these were considered active (Barandova 2007:8). Estimations of how many NGOs operate in Russia vary greatly, e.g. the European Economic and Social Committee estimated some 300,000 NGOs in 2004 – and assumed that only 10% of these were continuously active (Piehl 2004:13).

In April 2006 new NGO-legislation was implemented in the Russian Federation. The government explained the new amendments on registration and accountability procedures for Russian NGOs and their foreign donors with the fight against terrorism and money laundering, because terrorist networks and white collar criminals can cover up as NGOs and subsequently there is a need to control financial flows to Russian NGOs (Schmidt 2006). An overview over active NGOs is considered necessary, and expectations were made to have an official Russian estimate published in the spring of 2007. In the middle of May these numbers are still unknown to the public.

Criticism of the new regulatory framework has stressed that 'the measures are highly ambivalent, not least because official rhetoric is inconsistent with actual measures and bureaucratic practice' (Schmidt 2006:2), i.e. politics and security arguments are used to

implement merely technical changes in legal documents. It is also seen as an expression of the Russian authorities' fear of colour revolutions (Carothers 2006, Machleder 2006:8), especially after the orange revolution in Ukraine, when civil society forces successfully coloured the revote of the 2004 presidential election in favour of the most pro-Western candidate. Stricter rules on registration of foreign funding and more bureaucratic work for the CSOs receiving such funding are some of the consequences believed to come from this law reform (Evans 2005, Schmidt 2006). The NGO law is still only one of many control mechanisms used on the CSOs.⁶

Another form of state control with CSOs is top-down initiatives. Sundstrom (2006:6) argues that the Putin regime seeks a type of state corporatist system similar to the one that existed in the former Soviet regime, in which institutions that structure citizens' participation are initiated and controlled by the state. These institutions are being created from above with the intention of constituting a framework for civic activity. 'The Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights Council under the President of the Russian Federation', established by Putin in November 2004 (Schmidt 2005a:25) is an example of such an institution in today's Russia.⁷

The new 'Civic Chamber' (*Obshchestvennaia palata*) is another well known example of a state initiated civil society institution. Established in May 2005, the Civic Chamber consists of CSO leaders who are meant to represent citizens' views to the government as a collective ombudsman. It also contains a 'Commission to Study Practices for Guaranteeing Human Rights and Basic Freedoms and Monitoring Guarantees for them in Foreign States'. The task of this commission is to watch and report on human rights and

⁶ 'What is commonly called "The NGO law" is part of the broader bill "On introducing amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation" which is aimed at revising the Civil Code, the law on closed administrative territorial formations, the law on public associations, and the law on non-profit organizations' (Schmidt 2006:3).

⁷ The council is a replacement for the former Commission on Human Rights (Schmidt 2005a), and the current chairwoman is the highly profiled Ella Pamfilova.

freedoms in EU countries, the USA and the post-Soviet countries as well as preparing a proper Russian concept of democracy and freedoms (Schmidt 2006a:25).

2.3.1 Russian views on democracy

Different views on of what democracy really entails are significant when trying to understand civil society and democracy in context. Even if values of democracy are universal, civil societies are certainly not. Does a specific official Russian understanding of democracy exist? The form of democratic system that emerged in Russia after the collapse of the Communist regime was not one that promoted Western democratic ideals⁸ of participation and public liberties, but rather one oriented towards economic and political problem-solving. Political elites rising out of Soviet society was even accused of lacking the consciousness of thinking in liberal and democratic ways, much because of the absence of a civil society in the USSR (Linz and Stepan 1996a:378). The idea of a Russian form of democracy has become more accentuated by Russian leaders as the international critique towards development of Russian democracy increases.

Russia is a country that has chosen democracy through the will of its own people. It chose this road of its own accord and it will decide itself how best to ensure that the principles of freedom and democracy are realised here, taking into account our historic, geopolitical and other particularities and respecting all fundamental democratic norms. As a sovereign nation, Russia can and will decide for itself the timeframe and conditions for its progress along this road. But consistent development of democracy in Russia is possible only through legal means. All methods of fighting for national, religious and other interests that are outside the law contradict the very principles of democracy and the state will react to such methods firmly but within the law. (Putin 2005)

⁸ Differences between various Western forms of democracy, both in political systems and normative discourse are evident. This discussion does, however, fall outside the framework of this thesis. For more on this debate, see e.g. Schmidt (2005b).

In this excerpt from the annual address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on 25 April 2005, President Vladimir Putin expressed that he does not need “democracy assistance” from foreigners. This speech applies a position of Russian values in an international context of increasing critique of Russian authoritarian development (Schmidt 2005b:53,54).

International critique against Russian style democracy is broadly based on the state’s authoritarian attitude towards civil society, researchers and the press, and its control with the entire democratisation process. Russian critique on the other hand emphasises that the Russian legislative situation is seriously challenging for the CSOs, and that law enforcement and corruption have negative consequences for the CSOs’ situation. Russian researchers thus generally use a somewhat more neutral language in their characteristics of the same problems, e.g. that ‘civil liberties and press freedom need to be further developed and safeguarded’ (Proskuryakova *et. al.* 2005:3).

The St Petersburg Humanitarian and Political Science Centre “Strategy” and the Department of Public Policy of the Moscow State University Higher School of Economics made an assessment of Russian civil society in 2005, in which they concluded that ‘civic activism is not likely to substantially grow in the near future, since abolished elections of regional governors and the limitation of the space for policy engagement by citizens does not contribute towards citizens’ activism’ (Proskuryakova *et. al.* 2005:3). The same evaluation concludes that

(...) the connection between civil society and the Russian population remains rather weak. Furthermore, civil society suffers from insufficient resources, first of all, but not exclusively, financial. Foreign foundations, which still remain a key donor group in Russia, are downsizing their presence in the country, while grant and charitable programs of Russian authorities and businesses are still to gain weight, scope and experience. (*ibid.*)

2.4 Foreign involvement

A weak civil society is the first of two factors indebted to communist repression, which make post-Soviet countries interesting cases for studying effects of foreign involvement in civil societies. The second factor is the closed nature of the Soviet state. Because contact between Soviet citizens and foreigners was controlled and regulated in the USSR, Western CSOs that looked to the RSFSR during glasnost found a society where transnational CSO cooperation was virtually unknown.

An aspect to have in mind when dealing with foreign funding of Russian civil society is the fundamental differences between the Western model of CSO activity and the post-Soviet one. The Western liberal understandings and expectations of CSOs are often not meaningful in Russian reality and foreign sponsors of civic activity are frequently criticised as lacking the proper understanding of and sufficient connection to local needs and realities. Organisational initiative from foreign sources with little understanding of post-communist society risk affecting civil society development negatively (Henderson 2002). Based on this and other recent theories on the nature of foreign funding of Russian CSOs,⁹ I will in the following set forth three hypotheses with corresponding operationalisations. The first two assume consequences of Norwegian funding of CSOs in North-West Russia, and the third deduces influences of CSO cooperation with local authorities.

2.4.1 H1: Short-term results vs. civic development

Following the line of thought presented by Henderson (2002), the effects of Western and international assistance on building civil society and democracy in Russia are generally quite negative. Instead of building grassroots initiatives and horizontal networks of civic

⁹ By recent I have in mind theories developed to capture the developments in this sector after 2000 and the onset of the Putin regime.

engagement within the Russian CSO environment and between the CSOs and the population, foreign aid contributes to creating ‘vertical, institutionalized and isolated (although well-funded) civil community’ (Henderson 2002:140). Unequal relationships between Western funders and Russian CSOs are the result, despite other idealistic intentions from the donors (*ibid.*). Consequently, a patron-client relationship between the donor and the Russian recipient is established in the frame of funding. This structure impedes successful collective action in building a civic community because short-term benefits are preferred over long-term development by both the Russian recipients of funding and by the funders who desire traceable results. This ultimately hinders rather than facilitates civic development (Henderson 2002:141).

Accordingly, there is reason to question the sustainability of projects solely based on foreign funding. How can the work be sustained after the end of the project funding? Grants are typically project-based, and projects are normally limited to one year of funding before there has to be a new grant application. If there is no way of keeping the projects up and running by developing into a permanent structure when the money-flow stops, there is no real contribution to a long-term development of civil society.

Henderson (2002) stresses the point that incentives of grant-receiving CSOs apply for both the Russians and for their foreign partners. In this case, the Norwegian civil organisations that redistribute grants to Russian recipients also have to get money from somewhere. The source is frequently a Norwegian ministry or another state financed institution, like a county or the Barents Secretariat. The Norwegian CSOs thus have to convince their grant givers that there is a good reason to back their cause. In this way Norwegian CSOs are not free intermediate actors, and their incentive can be to design projects that emphasise short-term goals so as to produce results. In this way ‘all of those involved in building civil society with the help of foreign funding are encouraged to pursue short-term payoffs rather than build long-term results’ (Henderson 2002:147). This leads me to propose the following hypothesis.

H1: Norwegian assistance to CSOs operating in North-West Russia encourages the CSOs to pursue short-term benefits over long-term development.

By *Norwegian assistance* is understood Norwegian project funding as described in chapter 3. This can be measured by tracing the funding back to a Norwegian Ministry or the Barents Secretariat (see chapter 3.4.1). Operationalisations are also needed for the other terms in H1.

Short-term benefits are seen as financial or material support covering Russian CSOs' activities and expenses within the (short-term) project timeframe. The term can be measured by looking at the project components and the CSO's emphasis on goals that are easily measurable. One such project component is report writing, which is normally undertaken as a part of the project evaluation. Much report writing indicates an emphasis on inputs on a small scale rather than on sustainable results, because reports tend to focus on easily measurable outcomes like budget and money spent to achieve short-term project goals. There is a focus on the product created from the money granted (Henderson 2002:153). With the intention of having successful projects, the elements included in project proposals are likely to be measurable. Project components like seminars, trainings and publications are quantifiable and indicate significance and success if achieved in accordance with the project ideas.

Another approach to short-term benefits is to measure financial gains that the CSO achieves through salary and other compensations for project work. Coverage of office expenses and technical equipment are other financial short-term benefits. There is also more information besides the purely financial figures that can indicate how the incentives of a CSO are directed towards short-term results. I can measure how many employees the CSO has or aims to have, and especially the number of specialised employees that are dedicated to administrative work without having any connection to the issues of the CSO (as opposed to volunteers working there on a purely idealistic basis).

Long-term development is understood as broader participation in civil society, stronger horizontal ties between CSOs (civil society networks) and more influence for CSOs on political decision making. In other words the term indicates developing a stronger civil society. This is indeed less tangible, and hence more difficult to measure. In accordance with Putnam's theory on horizontal ties, networks of CSOs are perhaps the clearest sign of a long-term development. Since such networks can take many shapes, I will try to find as much information on this area as possible by applying open questions in the interviews about collaboration, trust and information sharing between CSOs as well as structured networks. Another part of the term is measured by the degree of voluntary work – the basis of the non-profit ideal behind civil society as a force separate from business and the government. To what extent is this applicable in a society where involvement in organisations is generally low? I believe that volunteer activity despite a general disinterest in participation can indicate a long-term dedication to a CSO's issues.

Furthermore, CSOs focusing on long-term development show a dedication to developing the community in which they operate on a long-term basis by focusing on local agendas, where local actors are trained to assist and teach other parts of the local population. In this way, a project initiated by foreign funding can develop into a local enterprise that lives on after the foreign actors retreat. Circulating alternative information to the public is an important part of this local perspective, so that people can develop their own opinions based on other information than that which is presented in the state controlled media. Influence on decision making is ultimately the major indicator as to whether the civil society actors aim for a long-term change or not. It can here be measured in the CSOs' attempts at affecting either local or regional authorities' decision making, since the CSOs by these attempts show that they are stretching for civil society to have a larger influence on the direction society is taking.

2.4.2 H2: Foreign funding, local competition

One plausible reason for the current weakness of CSO networks in Russia is, as mentioned, that civil organisations did not emphasise networking and collaboration between themselves due to the Soviet legacy. Another, more micro oriented explanation blames the donor's focus on internal CSO development and professionalisation for the same weakness of CSO networks. A narrow focus on internal matters rather than on external mobilisation in the population and between the CSOs in an area can lead to stagnation in the development of a functioning civic network that could influence politics and civic rights (Henderson 2002).

Regional research on Russian CSOs made by Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom between 1998 and 2000 support the weak network argument. Her findings indicate that even though foreign donors have invested heavily in communication networks among Russian CSOs, such communication is mostly simple information exchange and not concrete collaboration (Sundstrom 2006). I wish to find out whether this tendency towards weak CSO networking still seems to persist, or if the development during the past six years has altered the communication pathways between CSOs in North-West Russia, making them a more robust collaboration.

Foreign grants to CSOs might also create further cleavages in local societies and within an initially weak CSO community (Schmidt 2005a:28). The aspect of the 'new elite of civic activists' (Henderson 2002:157) is directly tied into the effects of foreign democracy assistance through aid and funding to CSOs. Instead of spreading horizontal ties in Russian civic communities, the CSOs compete over the funding. This competitiveness can even make groups split up, as personal or issue conflicts within an organisation can cause group members to leave and establish their own organisation and separate partnerships with foreign funders (Henderson 2002:160). Grants provide an incentive for different factions of an organisation to split up and seek possibilities to obtain resources for themselves.

Who receives the foreign funding in the CSO community? Two characteristics of grant receiving CSOs stand out. One is that the organisations with the longest history of receiving foreign funding keep on receiving it (Henderson 2002:158). The other is that “Western-looking” Russian CSOs are targeted as prime receivers of Western funding (*ibid.*:161). CSOs with the most Western-oriented attitudes and agendas *over time* win the trust of the funders and thus their grants. Is this the case with Norwegian assistance to Russian CSOs? Since the Russian CSOs in my study in general primarily receive Norwegian funding, I prefer speaking of certain “Norwegian-oriented” rather than the more unwieldy “Western” agendas in this second hypothesis.

H2: North-West Russian CSOs with a long history of Norwegian-oriented agendas receive the trust of the Norwegian funders and partners, creating a competition between the CSOs to adjust to Norwegian models of civil society activity.

Norwegian-oriented agenda would imply the attitude that some values and aspects of life are better in Norway and Norwegian ways of handling society’s problems is seen as the better path to follow. In some ways there is a parallel to the more general “Western attitudes” here, as Norwegian society would capture many of the same ideas of, for instance, freedom of press and transparency of political decision making – characteristics of Western style liberal democracy.¹⁰ In addition to attitudes, an agenda also consists of a plan with certain goals. In a Norwegian-oriented agenda, these goals are consistent with Norwegian criteria of project cooperation and Norwegian models of civil society activity.

Norwegian models of civil society activity – what does this imprecise term imply? I consider a deductive approach alone to yield little gain here. Since I will have access to Norwegian CSO actors, I will complete the operationalisation by asking them what kind of activity and norms they find characterise their civil society. The results of this will be

¹⁰ In other big society issues Norwegian ways may differ from the major Western, e.g. in the case of gender representation in company boards and of the state-church relationship.

presented in the analysis in chapter 5.2.1. One obvious Norwegian model is, however, possible to present: *the democratic organisation*.

This part of a Norwegian model of civil society activity is embodied in, and can be measured by the form that organisations take. Many are member based and rely on the members to use a democratic vote. Members could either elect a board that is entrusted with changing the statutes of the organisation, or the members gather in an annual meeting and vote directly on the statutes themselves. In Norway, the latter is the most common. In any case, the majority is meant to rule. In addition to this numeric side of the democratic organisation, it is also within a Norwegian tradition that it is deliberative; everybody has the right to be heard. The construction of a solid organisational structure based on democratic values, such as election by the members, represents a typical “organisation development project”.

2.4.3 H3: Authorities and CSOs

Regional research on foreign CSO assistance in Russia draws a line between the success of CSO assistance as civil society development and the acceptance of CSO activity in the local or regional political environment (Sundstrom 2006).¹¹ In other words, the foreign donors and the Russian CSOs are more likely to succeed with their goals in a region where the political deputies and bureaucrats are supportive of a strong and fairly independent civil society sector. Norwegian organisations collaborating with and supporting Russian CSOs thus have a better chance of developing civil society’s voice in a region where the authorities are willing to listen.

¹¹ Sundstrom conducted her research prior to Putin’s centralising reforms. With less power to the regional authorities, the supposition has less weight. On the other hand regional authorities interact with the regional CSOs when it comes to legal matters and regional concerns that affect the interests of CSOs. The oblast administration still holds the key to many matters of CSO concern, even though the federal government has increased its influence over CSOs.

Russia's regions have legislative provisions for state-civil society interaction, which according to Proskuryakova *et. al.* (2005) is sufficiently developed. At the regional and local levels influence of civil society on policy processes is somewhat more effective than on federal level (e.g. budget processes, human rights and social policy), although varying greatly from region to region (*ibid.*:4). How is it in North-West Russia? Indicators of formalised high-level interaction between CSOs and authorities are found in the Barents Cooperation. There are numerous projects with CSOs and authorities in the north-western regions, and there is established collaboration between Norwegian organisations and counties and the Murmansk and Arkhangelsk regional authorities. In view of that, I outline my third and final hypothesis.

H3: In North-West Russia a high level of cooperation between regional/local authorities and CSOs has a positive influence on the realisation of Norwegian-oriented agendas.

Who are *the local/regional authorities*? First of all there is an important difference between local and regional authorities. I will briefly characterize the two, starting with the regional authority. Political responsibility in the Russian regions is divided between a legislative and an executive power; respectively the *duma* or *sobranie* (assembly) and the administration. The administration is led by a governor in the territorial (non-ethnic) federation subjects, in this case the Murmansk and Arkhangelsk oblasts, and a president or *glava respubliki* (head of republic) in the ethnically defined subjects, like the republics of Karelia and Komi. Of the two powers the executive is by far the most powerful and influential even on legislation (Hønneland 2005:34). Hence, when talking about the regional authorities in this thesis, the regional executive powers are implied.

Local self-government is carried out directly by the populace and/or via local self-government bodies which are elected or appointed. In Murmansk city, Arkhangelsk city

and Apatity¹² the local self government bodies are elected and the mayor is in control of the executive. Local authorities are therefore defined as the executive powers on the local level, implying the mayors and their city administrations in the cases under scrutiny.

Ultimately it is relevant to conceptualise *high level of collaboration*. I see this as the kind of interaction where the CSOs feel that they are not only trying to get in contact with and get positive response from the authorities, but that they effectively experience such contact and response. The channels can be both formal (hearings, meetings and other lobbying) and informal (personal contacts). Cooperation can involve general issues of interest or be incorporated in concrete projects. Typical low level cooperation would on the other hand be mere routine interaction or even flawed attempts to get positive attention drawn to specific issues. I will specify the content of CSO-government cooperation by asking the interviewees about their interaction with regional and local authorities.

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has summed up important features of Russian civil society, from the transition to a more democratic regime in the late 1980s. On grounds of theory accounted for in chapter 1, an imperative tie between an independent, functioning civil society with influence on political decision-making and democratic development is established. Based on prior research presented in this chapter, there is no evidence of such an independent and influential civil society in Russian history. Neither the current Russian civil society seems in condition to influence the state in such a way as to contribute to the consolidation of democracy. People's sceptical attitudes towards CSOs and organisational life as an alternative way to influence politics further seems to hinder a strengthening of

¹² These three cities will be the central Russian areas of my research.

civil society, as does the lack of network mentality among the CSOs themselves. The strong presidential power seems to be set on controlling CSOs through state institutions and new laws. All of these factors, along with the weak start provided by Soviet legacy, contribute to the challenges that Russian civil society faces today.

Another challenge for Russian democratic development through civil society participation is that a Russian understanding of democracy is advocated by Russian authorities, while most foreign funding of Russian CSOs is based on a “Western” understanding of democracy. Prior studies of foreign funding of Russian civil society actors have resulted in several negatively charged theories on the effects of such funding. Based on such theories I have set forth three hypotheses – two on different effects of Norwegian funding on North-West Russian CSOs, and one on the effects of the local/regional political environment on the prospects of achieving the Norwegian goals of developing a civil society through funding CSOs. In addition to drawing on civil society theories I have based my assumptions on characteristics pertaining to the Russian-Norwegian CSO collaboration in the Barents Region. This particular part of the Norwegian High North policy is the main subject of the next chapter.

3. Norwegian High North Policy

The Government wishes to continue the support to the development of an open and democratic society in Russia. Such support will mainly be characterised by collaborative projects between Norwegian and Russian actors within media and the civil society. (Utenriksdepartementets fagproposisjon:2)¹³

Norwegian High North policy and Russian-Norwegian cooperation is naturally intertwined because of the Russian-Norwegian border in the High North and the recent history that has shaped Norwegian policy towards Russia during and after the Cold War. In the following I will summarize some historic milestones and briefly sketch the content of what is known as the High North Strategy. The main part of this chapter is then dedicated to the part of the Strategy called the Project Cooperation Programme with Russia, under which one finds the subsidies to CSOs operating in and with North-West Russia. This is, as indicated by the initial quotation, the main channel for Norwegian support of democratic development in Russia. Finally I will bring in some wider perspectives on Norwegian civil society support through the question of self interest and the Norwegian CSOs' role in politics through the Norwegian Model.

3.1 1950s – 1991: Cold War issues

I limit this brief historic overview to the issues that were of importance during and after the Cold War, in which Norway and the USSR were on opposite sides. Norway's policy towards the USSR during the years of tension between NATO and the Warszawa Pact can be described as one of both reassurance and deterrence. On the one hand there was an attempt of stabilising relations in the region with Norwegian "politics of reassurance" and

¹³ From the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' proposition to Norway's National Budget for 2007.

on the other hand Norway was cautious to engage in collaboration with the USSR without involving other Western powers. Self-imposed restrictions in the areas closest to the border illustrate this. For example, Norway did not permit other NATO countries to perform any military exercise activities east of the 24th longitude. At the same time Norway rejected closer collaboration with the USSR as late as in 1988, when there was a Soviet proposal of replacing the fishery “Grey-zone”¹⁴ in the Barents Sea with a permanent zone of collaboration (Hønneland 2005:15).

The three main traditional issues of Norwegian High North policy were marine area rights and fishery administration in the Barents Sea, the question of Svalbard¹⁵ and the question of the USSR as a security threat (Hønneland 2005:13). The latter is relevant here, because it clearly shows how the question of regional stability was important during the Cold War. Soviet military escalation on the Kola Peninsula was a trigger for the Norwegian “deterrence and reassurance” policy towards the USSR. When the imminent military threat disappeared along with the Soviet Union, so did the reason for the main content of Norwegian security policy in the north. The time had come for a new approach towards Russia – through regional cooperation.

3.2 1990s: Regional cooperation

Norway’s official policy towards Russia gradually changed after 1991. Although bilateral focus on fishery zones and nuclear security was preserved, the new focus expanded to include the relationship with Russia as part of something larger, namely the regional development in the High North. From 1993 to the end of the 1990s, the general Barents

¹⁴ Due to discrepancy on the division of the Economic Zones the two countries established a temporary “grey zone” in 1978, which is still in force in 2007, where each country is responsible for its own actions, with the aim of protecting the fish stock in the area (Hønneland 2005:15).

¹⁵ The Spitsbergen Treaty from 1920 gave Norway sovereignty of the Spitsbergen (Svalbard) islands, with certain restrictions, although both Norwegians and Russians resided and ran mining activity there. The administration of the sea area around the islands became a main question of conflict.

Cooperation, emphasising trade and business development between East and West in the area, was the main part of what was called the Norwegian High North policy (Hønneland 2005:18).

The concept of the BEAR, in which the Barents Cooperation takes place, was a manifestation of a new mindset opposing the Cold War separation in the northern areas. The idea was officially launched by Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Torvald Stoltenberg, at a meeting in Kirkenes in January 1993, and resulted in the Kirkenes Declaration aiming to enhance sustainable development and stability in the region. The Barents Cooperation became a platform of collaborative optimism after the tensions of the Cold War.¹⁶ Regional cooperation expanded based on the declaration's eight central areas of collaboration: environment, economy, science and education, regional infrastructure, health, culture, native peoples, and tourism.

Norway presented the relationship with North-West Russia as a natural and imperative part of the Barents Cooperation, although the perpetual central issues of fishery administration and security remained a bilateral affair. Nuclear security and other environmental issues in the Norwegian-Russian cooperation became important financial and symbolic issues of Norwegian High North policy during the 1990s, followed by a focus on the regional health programmes to prevent spreading of contagious diseases at the turn of the century (Hønneland 2005:18).

Behind these somewhat idealistic issues there were basic security policy concerns. Stability in the northern areas was as mentioned the overall goal that could be reached by these various points of entry. Such a broad approach would secure a stable situation with

¹⁶ On this platform there are two political levels; one is the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and the other is the Barents Regional Council (BRC). BEAC consist of country members and BRC of county members. BEAC: Denmark, Finland, Island, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the EU-Commission. Nine additional countries have observer status. BRC: Nordland, Troms and Finnmark in Norway; *Västerbotten* and Norrbotten in Sweden; Lapland, *Oulu* and *Kainuu* in Finland; Murmansk, Republic of Karelia, Arkhangelsk, *Republic of Komi* and *Nenets Autonomous Area* in Russia; and representatives of the region's three native peoples (sami, nenets, vesps). (The counties marked in *italics* were not included in BEAR from the very beginning.)

a neighbour that was still seen as a ‘sleeping bear’ that needed reassurance, even though the Cold War had ended (Hønneland 2005:170). In the following years the stabilising efforts were expanded through an intensified High North approach from the Norwegian government, in which democratic development in the north became one of the priorities.

3.3 2003 – 2007: A new strategy

Through the Barents Cooperation, the Government wants to strengthen the people-to-people cooperation between Norway and Russia, including engagement, information and democratic participation in civil society. (Plattform for regjeringssamarbeidet:6)

The High North policy making was intensified in 2003, when the government expert group that was set to identify new challenges and possibilities for Norway in the High North published its results in an official report (NOU 2003: 32). This was followed by White Paper nr 30 (2004–2005), that introduced the High North as a main focus area of Norwegian foreign policy. The overall goal remained the same – to secure political stability and sustainable development in the north (St. meld. nr 30 [2004–2005]). Nevertheless, as the above quotation from the political platform of the following government (2005-2009) shows, new focus areas concerning Russia were also set forth. After the main focus on oil, gas and marine resources, new highlights were people-to-people cooperation, democracy, indigenous peoples and human rights.

So far, the policy making on the field has peaked with the current government’s High North Strategy document dating from December 2006. The strategy sums up how Russia’s development in issues of rule of law, freedom of expression and human rights is important to Norway. It states how the economic, societal and political development in Russia ‘will be followed closely and measures adapted accordingly. We will maintain a candid dialogue with Russia and will be clear about Norway’s views on human rights, the

principles of the rule of law and political rights’ (Utenriksdepartementet 2006b:18).¹⁷

Furthermore the government states that ‘importance will also be attached to measures to encourage children and young people to take part in organisations, which will help to strengthen civil society and democracy in the region’ (Utenriksdepartementet 2006b:41).¹⁸

Norwegian high-ranking officials and state policy documents demonstrate that the current policy clearly includes more or less careful critique of Russian domestic affairs. Such approaches are made particularly visible in speeches by the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs. The latest speech he made on the matter was in Bodø on 15 March this year. On this occasion Jonas Gahr Støre stated that Norway should have certain expectations to ‘a democratic member of the Council of Europe’ concerning respect for the principles of rule of law and human rights, and for the conditions of freedom of speech and democracy. In the same sentence he even mentions ‘unacceptable events with murder of journalists’ (Gahr Støre 2007).

The road from policy to politics follows certain mechanisms. In this case, the policy on democracy as a stabilising force in the High North is mainly put into practice through the various forms of cooperation with Russia as with the other states in the BEAR. However, one mechanism differs from this pattern; i.e. the project cooperation programme with Russia. It was established in the early 1990s as part of the financial support for democratisation and economic and societal development in the former East Block countries (Hønneland 2005:53). Although Russia is now an economically potent democratic federation, that is to say, the main transition period seems to be over, Norwegian support canalised through this programme still remains significant.

¹⁷ Extracts from the High North Strategy are quoted directly from the official English version of the document.

¹⁸ E.g. the Barents Youth Cooperation Office (BYCO) in Murmansk, which I have interviewed as part of my data foundation, ‘was set up to provide information and guidance for youth groups, organisations and networks that are working with cross-border youth projects in the Barents region’ (Utenriksdepartementet 2006b:41).

3.4 The Project Cooperation Programme

The main objective with Norway's project support to Russia is to contribute to the adaptation to democracy and a market economy. This happens through collaborative projects where knowledge transfer and competence development are central. North-West Russia is the area with top priority, with a particular emphasis on the Russian part of the Barents Region which receives ca. 75% of the funding. (Sandhåland 2006)

Intentions of democracy support to Russia can partly be described in monetary terms. The budget allocation for project cooperation with Russia (the Project Cooperation) for 2007 was 111.3 million Norwegian crowners (Utenriksdepartementet 2006a).¹⁹ This is thus the largest budget expense post of the four main areas of foreign policy focus in the High North, just above nuclear security, and far ahead of arctic collaboration and the Barents 2020 research programme. The money is distributed to applicants whereby a wide variety of project grants are administered by specific Norwegian authorities: Barents regional projects through the Barents Secretariat; health and social projects through the Ministry of Health and Care Services; environment protection through the Ministry of Environment; education and research through the Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education and the Research Council of Norway; small funding budgets by the embassy and consulates; and finally, the bundle "energy, business development, infrastructure and democracy development" through the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The grants administered by the MFA in 2006 came to a total of 30.5 million Norwegian crowners (Sandhåland 2006).

The main focus area within the Project Cooperation Programme is people-to-people cooperation through subsidies to the Barents Secretariat (Utenriksdepartementet 2006a).

¹⁹ Since the focus on High North policy sharpened with the new Strategy in 2006, High North efforts got a proper budget chapter (chapter 118) with a post especially for the Project Cooperation with Russia (post 70). High North efforts was formerly placed under a more general chapter (chapter 197), and the Project Cooperation with Russia was a part of the more extensive project cooperation with Russia, Caucasus and Central Asia (the 'SUS' countries). It is thus problematic to compare this budget allocation over time.

Popular participation and project collaboration between civil society actors characterise the “people-oriented” aspect of this terminology used in current official Norwegian discourse. The official funding of these actors therefore becomes highly interesting as an expression of Norwegian investment in regional civil society development, both in North-West Russia and in North Norway. Since my research question includes the elements “democracy promotion, democratic development and CSOs” I find it relevant to look into the MFAs administration of project funding for democratic development and the Barents Secretariat’s administration of Barents regional projects with the same objective.

3.4.1 Civil society funding

How is Norwegian support to civil society advocates generally organised? The model for Norway’s policies of peace work, conflict resolution and development aid (known as the Norwegian Model) can also be relevant for CSOs cooperating closely with the state on democracy enhancing projects outside the framework of pure aid policy. The Norwegian Model has actively been developed by the MFA since the early 1990s, and is based on close collaboration between Norwegian government, research institutions and CSOs. In addition to the collaborative aspect with civil society, the model presents Norway as an economically strong and experienced “peace worker” and negotiator with long-term will to assist and a good relationship with key international actors (Utenriksdepartementet 2007a). The Norwegian aim of being a nation of peace and conciliation indicates a policy direction which embraces Norwegian contributions to civil society development in other countries. My intention is not to describe the model in detail nor to go into Norway’s peace and aid policies, but rather to show that there are more or less institutionalised

mechanisms for collaboration between government and CSOs that set a framework for government support of CSOs in close relation to the foreign policy.²⁰

How is Norwegian support to civil society advocates in North-West Russia organised? Although there are many paths to sponsorship, there are some main official roads that civil society actors can take to seek funding for their projects. The major road goes through the Project Cooperation described above. Since the means for this programme are defined on an annual basis in the National Budget, there is a policy of not giving guarantees for funding for more than one year. It is not normal to cover the entire project cost either, the applicants must show ability to contribute financially or supplement with funding from elsewhere. One can apply to the relevant ministries or to the Barents Secretariat, which administrates regional funds from the MFA.

What is the difference between the MFA and the Barents Secretariat as supporters of civil society? A study of their guidelines and forms for grant applications points out more similarities than differences between them. As the main objectives and prioritised geographic and subject areas are derived from the same Project Cooperation, this is to be expected. In addition to the main goals, there are specific objectives for each application granted, as listed in the various grant agreements. These of course vary depending on the purpose and type of project, but there are some recurring features, such as developing voluntary organisations, building networks and influencing political decision making. Because the criteria for project grants make out an important underlying part of my first hypothesis, I will sketch the main criteria of the two grant givers based on their guidelines to the applicants.

Main criteria for grants are closely tied in with the goals for the funding policy. The MFA has even put forward an official criterion that the applications should be in accordance

²⁰ Differences between development aid policies and foreign policies are seen as diminishing (Sande Lie 2006:140). After the reorganisation of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad, a directorate under the MFA) in April 2004, large parts of Norad's responsibilities for long term development aid was incorporated in the MFA.

with the goals stated in the guidelines. For example, the collaboration aspect is covered by the criteria that partners have to prove that there is established cooperation before applying. The Barents Secretariat did not use to have this as a criterion, but as of March 2007 it is implemented on grounds of enhancing the contact aspect of the collaborations.

Democracy is a regular goal area under the label ‘Democracy and Human Rights’ in the MFAs guidelines. One of the goals is to ‘build a free press and develop free formation of opinion’ and another is ‘strengthening and securing rule of law and human rights and building timely and democratic structures for applying justice’ (Utenriksdepartementet 2007b). Until 2007 The Barents Secretariat had solely followed its original five areas of priority when decisions on funding were made; i.e. industrial and commercial development, culture/welfare, environment/energy, education/competence and indigenous peoples. In the latest guidelines to grant applications (Barents Secretariat 2007) a new sixth area of priority has appeared in the list. This area is democracy. Interestingly, this sixth area is not quite in harmony with the oral data I have gathered on the issue.²¹

Common criteria also appear in a list over initiatives that do *not* qualify for funding; i.e. all support is to be purely project based, so no grant goes to support of general operating expenses (such as rent, salary etc.), although it can go to start-up costs in an initial phase. Nor does any money go to research, marketing of goods or services, or establishment of businesses in Norway. Grants that are not used in accordance with the criteria can be withdrawn at any time.

The main differences between the two grant programmes are that the Barents Secretariat has a regional focus whereas the MFA has a wider geographic focus. The Barents Secretariat is also characterised by its youth perspective, which is well developed with its

²¹ In an interview with Thomas Nilsen, the Deputy General Secretary, I was told that some projects were hard to place in any of the five categories (such as the journalist collaboration and concrete democracy projects) and pure human rights projects were generally ruled out. I even asked if they were considering changing the categories of priority. The answer was no; they rather wanted to constrict them (Nilsen 2007 [interview]). Nilsen underlined nonetheless that the human rights idea is fundamental and lies behind all of the Barents Secretariat’s funding (Nilsen 2007 [interview]).

own project manager and project databases, aimed at ‘community development where the special needs of youth are given attention’ (Barents Secretariat 2007). Smaller differences are that the MFA specifically requests documentation of prior results, and directs the granting at Norwegian applicants.²²

3.5 Beyond funding

An important dimension to development in the Barents Region has been Norwegian financial support to projects in Russia. Now we are seeing increasing debate about this policy. We will welcome that debate. Some people say that we should reorganise the policy. Russia is no longer a poor country, and we have to stop giving money, it is said. I do not share that critique. We are not running a money-gift policy. We are using the budget resources on that which benefits Norwegian interests, because it is good for Norway. (Gahr Støre 2007)

This statement from a speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs points at a different perspective to project funding – that of Norwegian interests. In what ways are Norwegian interests served by Norwegian participation in the development of civil society and democracy in Russia? In a macro perspective people cooperating on a broad range of society issues create more regional stability, in accordance with the superior goal of the Barents Cooperation and the Norwegian government. On a micro level grounds for Norwegian business and other economic interests in North-West Russia and North Norway are developed by Norwegian presence, participation and building of trust and networks. I will not proceed into a market aspect here; it suffices to say however that it can account for an obvious incentive or a beneficial side effect of cooperation at the least. In stead I intend to lead the question in a more idealistic direction, i.e. that of the Norwegian understanding of democracy.

²² In theory Russians are also welcome to apply directly to the MFA, but all the forms are in Norwegian. The Barents Secretariat operates with all forms in English.

In the two interviews I conducted with representatives directly involved in granting Norwegian official democracy support (Rune Aasheim, Consul General in Murmansk, and Thomas Nilsen, Deputy General of the Barents Secretariat) variants of the question of Norwegian idealistic interests came up. I consider the answers to reflect of the official ideas behind Norwegian support of civil society actors in North-West Russia. Both representatives emphasise the importance of acknowledging the differences between Norwegian and Russian society for collaboration in civil society projects for democracy development. The goal is that the Norwegians show their experience and knowledge to the Russians, which they then can adapt to their own perceptions and realities. The Consul General concretises the term "democracy support" with the support of projects that lead to more openness in Russia.

More openness cultivates what we see as democracy in everyday life. For instance public hearings, though they are what the Russians call *pokazukha*; a showcase. Still they have moved on towards more openness in society, in line with our understanding of openness. But I doubt that it will be like it is in Norway. (...) Much of what we do is to give Russia help to self-help and show that collaboration is useful for all partners. It is a win-win situation that is also important for the idea of democracy; in opposition to the zero-sum game that is ingrained here. It will lead to changes of attitudes over time (Aasheim 2007 [interview]).

It is accordingly not a goal to transfer a Norwegian understanding of democracy. Yet there is emphasis on what is seen as the less favourable sides of Russian democracy from a Norwegian perspective. A change in attitude towards a more "Norwegian" idea of openness and inclusiveness of civil society in governmental decision making is the best case scenario. Aasheim defines democratic rights in line with this view: 'that the civil society, through organisations etc, can participate in shaping decisions in society' (Aasheim 2007 [interview]). Thomas Nilsen also connects the same components, and adds that the centralisation of Putin weakens development of democracy, because it increases the distance between decisions and the general population (Nilsen 2007

[interview]). The understanding of CSOs as bridge-makers between the public and government is evident in both interviews.

According to the Norwegian Model this is the prevailing understanding of government-CSO cooperation and funding in Norway. Both government and CSOs heavily underline that mechanisms for funding and collaboration between Norwegian government and Norwegian CSOs are characterised by a fundamental independence. It is, however, debatable (and often debated) to what extent one can speak of independence with such intense interaction between state and CSOs. The strong financial support flowing to the CSOs implicates a significant economic dependence, but there is also a strong political influence going the other way. CSOs are dependent on projects financed by the state and the state is dependent on the CSOs work to implement its policy (Sande Lie 2006:147).²³ Borders between civil society and state actors easily become blurred in such a model. When the CSOs follow the state's guidelines for project collaboration with Russia as well as more specific project criteria, they simultaneously take over part of the state's policies and transform it into action; in other words, into politics. In the analysis in chapter 5 I will look into how Norwegian democracy support is carried out by the Norwegian CSOs and discuss how the grant criteria of the government influence the funding criteria of the CSOs to Russian civil society actors.

3.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have given a brief historic overview over the important subjects in Norwegian High North policy to Russia, from the Cold War's "politics of deterrence and reassurance" until today's new High North Strategy. I have focused on Norwegian funding of civil society actors in Norway and Russia through the Project Cooperation, with the intention of clarifying the financial and political background on which

²³ For further discussion about this subject, see Sande Lie (2006) pp. 138-164.

Norwegian democracy assistance to Russia is based. The comparison between the guidelines of the MFA and the Barents Secretariat points to a collective policy idea in which criteria for democracy support seem to be increasingly streamlined. Finally, I discuss some aspects of Norwegian interests in developing Russian civil society and democracy, and place this in the more general framework of state-CSO cooperation in the Norwegian Model. Further questions regarding state influence on CSOs are transported to the main analysis in chapter 5. The strategy that leads to this analysis will be presented in the next chapter.

4. Research strategy

This case study is based on multiple sources of information and methods of data collection, including semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, primary document study and secondary literature study – all providing different perspectives on democratic development in North-West Russia and Norwegian involvement in such. A research strategy does, however, contain more than the data foundation and the methods of collecting data; also it includes the relevant investigative questions, propositions, and methods of analysis (Yin 1994:20). Propositions found in my hypotheses and research question guide the way to relevant questionnaire- and interview questions. Subsequently, the same propositions are the starting point for coding and analysing data in a software programme designed for qualitative analysis.

The reason for using a qualitative approach in this thesis is twofold. Firstly, qualitative methodology allows the researcher to explore an individual's experience of a phenomenon and subsequently draw conclusions from this. Since all my hypotheses aim to measure subjective perception as well as facts, I choose to conduct qualitative interviews. They reach deeper into the respondents' world of understanding and retrieve subjective information, in contrast to the questionnaires and documents that mainly provide background information and facts. Secondly, Norwegian project funding to Russian CSOs has not been widely studied, thus I start out with little information about the subject. A wide approach that includes dialogue with open-ended questions and subjective information helps me to understand more of the phenomenon I am studying. According to Repstad (1993), qualitative methods are commonly used to cast light on subjects that have not been extensively researched. However, there are methodological shortcomings in the use of qualitative methods. The prospect of generalisation is one such problem. Another is structuring the collected data in order to construct a reliable analysis. These subjects will be touched upon in the following sections, in light of experiences from this study and as part of the overall research strategy.

4.1 Narrowing down the research

Limitations are necessary to narrow down the field of research to the essence: How *are* civil society organisations in North-West Russia influenced by Norwegian support? The subjects that I have chosen to concentrate on are the ones I consider most relevant to this question and to the hypotheses, as well as to civil society and democratisation theory. This of course results in some limitations in need of more concrete explanation, starting with the limitation of primary sources of information; the organisations that were interviewed and the documents that were analysed.

The official documents limit themselves, since documents relevant to Norwegian funding of Russian civil society are scarce. I use the High North Strategy, the National Budget (St. prp. nr. 1 [2006-2007]), and the MFA's recommendations to this, as well as the "Soria Moria" declaration of the current government (Plattform for regjeringssamarbeidet). These documents explain goals of Norwegian democracy promotion as part of the High North policy. To find official criteria for funding of CSOs I compare the guidelines to project granting by the MFA and the Barents Secretariat under the Project Cooperation with Russia. As indicators of how funding routine is structured to include such criteria, I also study the application forms of the MFA and the Barents Secretariat as well as two project approvals and a project report that were made available by the MFA.²⁴ Possible Russian documents about Norwegian funding of CSOs are not included in this study due to the simple fact that I cannot read nor find them. This weakens the variation of the data basis. I nevertheless find it defensible to focus solely on Norwegian official documents, since my aim is to study the effects of Norwegian policy on civil society actors.

Organisations that were actively involved in civil society projects with Norwegian funding through the Barents Secretariat and the MFA between the years 2000 and 2007

²⁴ These are project approvals of the Norwegian Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (NFU) and Bellona, and a project report from the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and the Women's Congress of the Kola Peninsula (CWKP).

were included in the selection of CSOs to be studied. The timeframe was chosen firstly because the project databases I used for selection were not well developed before the year 2000. Secondly, the interval contains the political and societal development under one Russian president. In 2000 there was a political shift in Russia with Vladimir Putin – and this is when I start to look at project collaboration. The timeframe ends at the point the interviews were done, in early 2007. A study of the development of state policies under the same political leader avoids spurious effects of changing presidencies on the societal developments I have set out to investigate.

I primarily used the project databases of the Barents Secretariat to select the relevant CSOs. The MFA also provided me with a project list of some 53 funded CSOs, both Russian and Norwegian between 2000 and 2006 (Rendahl 2006), but the MFA had no overview of all government funded CSOs. Additional projects might be funded by different ministries. Due to restrictions of time for research as well as poorly coordinated data of projects funded in the various ministries, I did not include such additional projects in the selection.

Further informants were found through the Barents Institute and the Centre for Russian Studies at NUPI. A couple of CSOs were located through snowball sampling after the initial selection had been made. In these cases Norwegian CSO actors tipped me about contacts and gave me valuable access to Russian actors previously unknown to me. The organisations selected had all participated in one or more projects that had a direct connection or appeal to democratic development or to development of civil society including the aspect of democratisation in the region.

A selection of organisations involved in projects with a clear democratisation purpose – such as enhancing knowledge of indigenous peoples rights or youth organisation development – represents the organised civil society forces that I set out to investigate. Due to the lack of a clear subject division in the project databases at the time of case selection, I made a “democratisation” category myself based on the project descriptions. The majority of these organisations were involved in environmental, indigenous peoples,

education/competence and culture related issues. A variety of different organisations has democratisation objectives and I consider the heterogeneity of the CSOs to be embedded in this variety. However, project descriptions can deviate from reality. Also, there are different understandings of democracy and how it is best developed, and project descriptions are likely to be based on distinct definitions. This is a weakness in my way of selecting cases, and I have taken this into consideration when making the interview questions by asking about the respondent's understanding of democracy and civil society.

The research is furthermore restricted by geographic boundaries, defined in chapter 1 as the Russian part of the Barents region consistent with the official Norwegian definition. Since most of the Russian CSOs that collaborate with Norwegian actors within my frame of study are located in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, and I had limited possibilities of finding relevant CSOs in other regions, the geographic area of study is restricted to these two regions.²⁵ In addition, the CSOs in Moscow represent a broader view on North-West Russian civil society development. They have projects in many of the Russian regions, including Nenets, Karelia, Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. The Norwegian organisations involved in project activity in North-West Russia are located in Murmansk, the three northern counties of Norway and in Oslo.

Practical research restrictions of budget and timeframe also matter to the quality and quantity of collected data. The budget allowed me to visit relevant places, but the timeframe for the research trip restricted the time spent on each interview. Moreover, the interviewees' own schedule mostly also imposed restrictions on time spent on an interview.²⁶ Finally, limitations are necessary for terms used in hypotheses and research questions, in other words, there is a need for operationalisation. These are made throughout the thesis as the relevant terms appear, initially with the development of the hypotheses in chapter 2.4.

²⁵ I found one relevant CSO that operated in Karelia too, but I did not manage to establish contact.

²⁶ Consequently I spent an average time of two hours (from one hour to a day) with the people I interviewed.

4.2 Data collection

After establishing which organisations still existed or were reachable in other ways, I ended up with 20 Russian and 25 Norwegian CSOs which I contacted by e-mail. Of these I received positive responses from 15 Russian and 17 Norwegian CSOs. A big Russian actor like the Red Cross simply cut me out after my contact there suddenly quit her job in the organisation.²⁷ Except for the Red Cross I ended up actually interviewing all the Russian CSOs that had responded to my initial request, and 14 of the Norwegian CSOs.²⁸ In other words, I contacted all the relevant units (i.e. the ones within the set geographic-, time- and subject boundaries) that I found in the project protocol of the Barents Secretariat and through the MFA. A validity problem arises when not *all* the relevant organisations in the region were included in the initial base of selection. There might be more organisations financed through official Norwegian funding than I found, since Norwegian counties and individual cities also have project collaborations with Russian actors, and other ministries than the MFA probably fund projects with motives of developing civil society.

Purely by chance, I made contact with the oblast administration in Murmansk. Originally I did not have expectations of getting interviews with Russian officials, but since I had an appointment with the leader of the regional public affairs office in her parallel role as leader of a CSO network, I expanded my focus. I lack information from the Arkhangelsk administration due to no such opportunity there; I had no prior contacts in the administration and little time to build up my network. Consequently, there is a difference in sources between the two main regions in my study.

The field work was conducted in eleven cities in Norway and Russia in January, February and March 2007. In the three northern counties of Norway I visited the towns Kirkenes,

²⁷ I later found out that communication difficulties with Murmansk and Arkhangelsk Red Cross are nothing out of the ordinary even for their Norwegian partner (Ottar Kvaal 2007[Interview]).

²⁸ Due to practical restrictions of time and travel I could not follow up three of the positive Norwegian responses.

Alta, Tromsø, Bardufoss and Bodø, as well as the capital Oslo. In North-West Russia I visited Murmansk, Apatity and Arkhangelsk, as well as St. Petersburg and the capital Moscow. I conducted a total of 33 interviews with different representatives of Russian and Norwegian CSOs, the Barents Secretariat, the Norwegian Consul General and the regional administration in Murmansk.

4.2.1 The interviews

I sent the organisations standardised questions by e-mail,²⁹ aiming to retrieve basic and background information about the organisations and their activities and standpoints. This was followed by field research where a set of more loose, open ended questions formed the basis for semi-structured interviews to complete the data collection. The two-step interview was originally based on the idea that the first questionnaire would serve as a pointer to the relevant questions in the following interview and consequently as a way of making the most of the face-to-face time. There are two versions of both questionnaires and interview guides, one version for the Russian and one for the Norwegian CSOs (appendices B-E). Questions for the Barents Secretariat and the MFA are separate, as they have a distinct focus on Norwegian policy.

One great advantage with semi structured interviews is that they can be altered in accordance with conversational dynamics. They also give the researcher a chance to learn from her own mistakes and new information gathered along the way. Such responsive interviewing (Rubin and Rubin 2005:35) improves the questions and follow ups to spontaneous statements, feelings and information that arise during the interview. This flexibility is important for the in-depth study, in which I use interviews as a tool.

²⁹ A Norwegian form was sent to the Norwegian CSOs and both a Russian and an English version to choose from to the Russian CSOs. The Russian questionnaire is longer than the Norwegian one, as I had more standardised questions in mind for the Russians.

Settings for the interviews were generally the interviewees' offices, on a few occasions we met in cafés and hotel lounges, once the interviewee took me in as a guest in her home, and once I did a phone interview. I mention this to underline the importance of a setting for the feeling of control that the interviewee will have over the interview situation. A more relaxed interviewee is generally a more open one. The phone interview gave me less information due to the lack of observation, but the conversational flow was excellent and I could typewrite the entire conversation. I chose to use notes in stead of a recorder for three reasons: firstly, listening to recordings is extremely time consuming, secondly, taking notes allows unnoticed commenting on situations, observations, moods etc., and thirdly, I am familiar and comfortable with taking notes from interviews. After each interview I transcribed the notes as soon as possible to take advantage of a fresh memory.

The questions were crafted to capture different aspects of the hypotheses, with the intention of using the answers as evidence of verification or falsification. For example, question 6 in the questionnaire to the Norwegians (appendix C) captures the initial tendencies included in H1 regarding encouragement for short-term benefits.³⁰ The four parts of the question constitute part of the operationalisation of "short-term benefits". A more in-depth complement to this superficial question is found in the interview guide's question 2b³¹ (appendix E). The same logic applies in the Russian questions: H3, on CSO-government cooperation, is in this way partly investigated by asking for yes/no to questions 23-27³² (appendix B). In the interview, this was followed up by asking a locally relevant question like 16: 'How does your organisation consider its influence on local political decision-making, for instance on *the establishment of a youth parliament*?'³³

³⁰ Does your organisation emphasise: a) Rapid results from your partner? b) Reports/evaluations from your partner? c) Seminar attendance? d) Anything else in the cooperation?

³¹ What does your organisation expect from the collaboration?

³² E.g. question 25: Does your organisation invite politicians or representatives of governmental authorities on meetings etc.?

³³ The last part was always exemplified with an actual local political issue; the youth parliament was a case I used on a youth NGO in Murmansk.

Such a division of questions with the same analytical logic in two distinct settings also serves as a reliability check on coherence between the same respondent's answers given at two different points in time.

Pre-tests were made to secure the relevance and comprehensiveness of the content and the form and layout of the questions. Three Norwegian CSOs³⁴ gave feedback on the first drafts of the Norwegian questions and one Russian civil society researcher³⁵ gave extensive feedback on the Russian questions. In addition, my supervisor and the Barents Institute gave feedback on several versions of all questions.

Finally, an imperative ethical consideration when handling interview data is to seek informed consent. I gave all the interviewees information about the purpose and public character of my thesis, and they were offered the possibility to be anonymous if desired. None of the interviewees took me up on this offer. I therefore refer to the true names of my sources when quoting them, which simultaneously enhances the trustworthiness of the data. Nevertheless, at times I consider the possible consequences of statements to be potentially harmful to the interviewees, and thus in such cases, I opt to leave out direct references.

4.3 Criteria of quality

The frequently used quality criteria in social sciences are validity and reliability. These terms are controversial in qualitative research and often criticized for attempting to achieve an artificial consensus about a simulated uniform reality (Ryen 2002:176-177). Reliability criteria are difficult to consider because it is impossible to replicate the exact same qualitative research and hence check the trustworthiness of the data presented

³⁴ These were Bellona, the Human Rights House and NPA.

³⁵ Tatiana Barandova from St.Petersburg Humanitarian and Political Science Center "Strategy".

(Dalen 2004:102-104). Alternative quality criteria have been elaborated in qualitative research tradition, replacing conventional quantitatively oriented terms. Lincoln and Guba (1985:300) provide alternatives that can be more logical in qualitatively directed research; i.e. credibility as an alternative to internal validity, transferability as opposed to external validity, dependability in stead of reliability and confirmability rather than objectivity. Using a typical quantitative quality criterion like reliability makes little sense when there is no mechanism for estimation of one true score. Perhaps the term dependability, in accounting for the ever-changing context within which research occurs, provides a better alternative? Without entering too deeply into discussions of terminology, I will point out some quality criteria for my own research and some problems of dependability and validity that I encountered.

The underlying relationship between civil society and democratic development, and between CSOs and the development of democratic values in society, are discussed in the sections on civil society theory in chapter 1. Civil society theory clearly claims that civil society activism and activity are beneficial for democracy. The validity of this research does however depend on the accuracy of such a connection of phenomenon in the area of study. The little research on civil society issues in North-West Russia does indeed indicate that the same general connection exists between civil society activism and democratic development in North-West Russia (Barandova 2007).

For this thesis to have scientific value, I have to be quite confident that I am in fact measuring the phenomenon that I set out to investigate, namely implications of Norwegian funding to North-West Russian CSOs as perceived by the involved actors. There must be a link between theory and reality, and this is described by so-called construct validity (Yin 1994), which involves generalising the operational measures for the concepts in my question and hypotheses to the actual concepts I claim to be studying. Does the observed reality correspond with the theoretical assumptions on which I base my research? This is the train of thought running through the analysis in chapter 5, where I continuously test the theoretical assumptions by breaking data into operational measures

in a coding scheme and putting them back together in theoretical context. The conceptualisation needed for such a scheme was already set when I outlined the interview guides and the questions, since they made me specify what I thought about the constructs in my study.

External validity, on the other hand, implies that the findings of my study can be analytically generalised (Yin 1994:33), i.e. they are applicable in other contexts or with other subjects. Because analytical generalisation strives to generalise a particular set of results to broader theory, I should test my hypotheses through replication on several cases (Yin 1994:36). Given that I have accessed about twice the amount of informants than initially expected, I have about twice as many cases forming the data material as originally planned. The consequences of basing the study on more cases are a broader data foundation and a more representative selection of the CSOs in the Russian and Norwegian Barents Region. The large number of civil society actors and funders interviewed actually makes my study into less of a clear cut case study and warrants limited generalisations and quantifications of data. Within the limitations of time and space the findings could be applicable to other Russian CSOs receiving Norwegian funding for activity that aim to enhance democratic values, but they cannot be generalised to Russia as a whole, nor to Norwegian democracy development policy in other areas of the world.

A disturbing data quality problem that I face occurs in the data collection process and concerns the way the actors I study perceive me and my intentions. The problem is related to the simple fact that I am a Norwegian student researching Norwegian funding and receivers of such. On top of that, I am collaborating with the Barents Institute, which is closely connected to the Barents Secretariat,³⁶ which evaluates project proposals and decides which projects are to be financed. I might get more restricted or even adapted

³⁶ They both have offices in the same building in Kirkenes and both the Secretariat and the Institute are heavily financed by the MFA.

answers from both the Russian and the Norwegian CSOs that depend on this funding. If a totally independent researcher from a different country were to do the same study, she might get different answers to some key questions. This is a problem of trustworthiness in the interview data that I have tried to avoid by explaining how I am in fact an independent researcher, and asking directly how the interviewees perceive my role. On the other hand, my collaboration with the Barents Institute might also have been positive for me in way of the respondents' interest in answering the first questionnaire and agreeing to meet me for an interview. My own background seems to be a double-edged sword.

4.3.1 Quality of interviews

Problems of validity and dependability can appear when using an interpreter in the interview situation. I was assisted in a total of three interviews by two different interpreters, both connected to the Barents Secretariat's offices in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk respectively. The fact that they work in these offices enhances the previously described problem, as I am hereby even more connected with the Barents Secretariat. Especially two situations that I experienced illustrate how the use of an interpreter can cause validity problems: One interpreter consequently translated into third person, so that I cannot always distinguish whether the interviewee is talking about herself or if she is in fact referring to a third person. I did not notice this soon enough for all confusion to be ruled out. The other interpreter mingled into the conversation and tried to help me by fishing for an answer when the interviewee was reluctant to give one.

Language-related problems of course also appeared. The word "challenge" is frequent in questions about actor relations, and this word is not commonly used in this manner in Russian. Russians rather perceive this as "problem" and hence misunderstand the question as something purely negative. I discovered this in an early stage, and could add explanations to questions of "challenges". Other errors occurred because of language as well. I used a translator in Kirkenes to translate the questionnaires and the Russian answers to them. I found out that the word "political" had been included in the translation

of question 27 in the Russian questionnaire. This somewhat alters the meaning of the question, especially since “political” is a trigger word for many CSOs in Russia.

In an interview situation it is important to take the interviewees’ expectations and reasons for meeting me into consideration as well as my own expectations. The interviewees were bound to have a selection of information that they wanted to tell me, especially since they had already received topic directions in the questionnaire. Such selectiveness could imply exclusion of data that they felt was unimportant or even direct avoidance of some sensitive data. I therefore try to be aware of what was *not* responded to and what was not asked, and why. A theme that remained inaccessible to me is the competition between Russian civil society actors over foreign funding. I will come back to this in the analysis.

4.4 Data analysis method

Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) is the space where I organise data. I use the software programme Nvivo7, to structure the project material in such a way that I am able to analyse the data in detail and context. It facilitates coding of text and handling annotations, memos, connections, matrices and queries in and of the material. I base my coding scheme on the components of my hypotheses and on new key subjects noted during the research.

Rubin and Rubin (2005:244) emphasize that responsive interviewing is not about how many times a concept appears, but rather about the strength of the evidence on which it depends. I do not use software for word and concept counting since this sort of text analysis fails to capture the contextual relevance of words and phrases. There are a multitude of other functions that I ignore simply because they are irrelevant to my purpose of using the programme, namely to achieve data structure to organise facts and tendencies in a handy analytic overview. Orienting in the jungle of interviews, questionnaires, memos, notes and documents requires a conceptual map, and this is what the software assists me in making. Ultimately my own evaluations lead me to meaningful

data by following the structures I make in the programme. Computer programmes that automate statistical analysis, like SPSS, are different in the sense that they actually carry out the analysis, for example, of a multiple regression, for the researcher. CAQDAS is not suited for such operations. It merely facilitates quantifications by encouraging systematic coding and automatic search for strings according to the implemented coding.

In the end, my entire project is stored in one virtual space, which facilitates not only my analysis structure, but also the possibilities for others to check my entire work (appendix F). Checking conformability and testing dependability becomes more feasible with simple access to all research documents and notes, as well as to the line of thought behind the analysis embedded in the coding and the enquiries made in the programme.

4.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have outlined the methods used to select and locate sources and to collect and analyse data. The research strategy is based on a deductive approach to the data, which is collected by a triangulation of qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews and primary document analysis with quantitative questionnaires. Several limitations restrict the research and are necessary for a clear focus on the geographic areas, time, subjects and actors that are relevant to the guiding question. A description of the fieldwork and the interview technique accounts for the methods of data collection.

Moreover, I have presented a number of quality criteria for methods and data, and, to some extent, discussed them in light of my own experiences. Particularly problems of confidence between interviewer and interviewee and of the researcher's independence from Norwegian financiers have been highlighted. Finally, I have presented CAQDAS as a data structuring tool that facilitates the analysis of data in context. In the next chapter I will lay out and discuss the results of the data-assisted analysis in light of theory and assumptions.

5. Crossing assumptions

In this chapter I aim to discuss data analysed in relation to the three initial hypotheses described in chapter 2. The general tendencies and the deviant cases will be exemplified with interview quotations of civil society actors in Norway and North-West Russia. A discussion of the theoretical hypotheses' validity and relevance to the empirical reality follows throughout the chapter.

In the first section I will set the scene of how Norwegian democracy support is carried out by discussing how the grant criteria of the Norwegian government influence the partnership criteria of the Norwegian CSOs. Next, I weigh the evidence from interviews and guidelines against H1, before reaching a conclusion. In the second section a discussion of the importance that CSOs' history and agendas have for cooperation and competition will lead to conclusions regarding H2. The third section is dedicated to CSOs' interactions with Russian authorities and subsequent implications for H3. I will also introduce some new aspects that cast light on the guiding question of how Norwegian democracy promotion influences advocates of democratic development.

5.1 In the wake of funding

Following the neo-institutional line of thought presented by Henderson in chapter 2.4, I expected to find Russian CSOs that were encouraged by their Norwegian partners and funders³⁷ to pursue short-term benefits in projects over long-term civic development. To evaluate this hypothesis properly, I have to measure the criteria for funding and the

³⁷ The word *partner* is mostly preferred by both the Norwegian and the Russian civil society actors, in stead of a more differentiating word like *funder*. I will use *partner* when referring to the collaborating CSOs and *funder* when referring to grant giving foundations, ministries or other government authorities, the Barents Secretariat or private grant givers.

expectations of Norwegian partner CSOs as well as the content of prior projects that have been funded through a Norwegian partner.

I tried to spot incentives to short-term gains and long-term commitment by asking questions deducted from the hypotheses as operationalised in chapter 2.4. It is of course likely that most interviewees would answer in such a way that would make their organisation appear as long-term focused as possible. The general impression I got from questionnaires, interviews, observations, applications and reports was nevertheless that although there are economic incentives to be expected in the third sector, the people who work in voluntary organisations certainly do not do so to become rich. There is always an idealistic motivation to improve society for the present and for future generations.

The so-called “grant game” that Henderson (2002) had in mind quickly became clear to me as I talked with Russian and Norwegian CSO-representatives. There is almost no funding from Russian government or private sponsors, and most of the CSOs that collaborate with foreign organisations have foreign funding as the only significant source of income. In this picture short-term payoffs are essential as a way to survive as an organisation and as employees. This has, however, nothing to do with the fundamental wish to make a real difference in a long-term perspective. The frontier between incentives for short-term results and long-term progress is therefore anything but clear-cut.

5.1.1 Criteria and expectations

The MFA and the Barents Secretariat have guidelines for funding through the Project Cooperation with Russia as outlined in chapter 3.4.1. The Norwegian CSOs that apply through the MFA and the Barents Secretariat must of course consider these funding institutions’ criteria. In addition they have criteria of their own in relation to the Russian partners, which vary greatly depending on the type of organisation and their particular aims. Some partners have strict criteria, others are not aware that they have any. A multitude of topics are considered fundamental for funding and collaboration by the

different organisations.³⁸ I will here introduce the most frequent criteria, i.e. report writing, seminar attendance, and shared values.

All the Norwegian CSOs but Troms Red Cross expect consistent feed back from the Russian partners, in form of reports or evaluations. Why are reports important? There can be formal reasons for this, specifically that reports are demanded from the funder. Often the Norwegian CSO writes the final report to the MFA or the Barents Secretariat on behalf of both partners in the project. These final reports also serve a purpose; they point to problem areas and they can even be a way of improving funding criteria. Whether the organisation in fact reports on all the difficulties they experience is, however, uncertain. After all, they depend on yearly rounds of applications and acknowledgments before more funding is secured, considering that the amount of the Project Cooperation is established each year in the national budget.

The CSOs are also quite unanimous about the need for participation in specific project seminars or courses. All partners but two emphasise project seminars, often because seminars can facilitate communication between the attendants and make way for exchange of knowledge. What the CSOs do not directly say, is that seminars may be preferred because they are easily reachable goals. This is not to say that arranging a seminar is easy, but rather that it is a goal that can easily be turned into a concrete result, and accounted for as a success in a final project evaluation to the MFA or the Barents Secretariat.

Contrasting concrete results are values of reliability and responsibility in a partnership. Although not actual criteria for funding, these values were mentioned as decisive qualities in a partner, thus they can easily decide whether funding goes on or not. An established

³⁸ Topics mentioned by the CSOs were volunteer work, attendance in specific seminars or courses, specific results, reports, prior experience with project work and foreign partners, personal contact, the establishment of a democratic organisational structure, legal operation, grassroots origin, international focus, local focus, networks with local government and other CSOs, influence in society, communication, work with specific issues, and more universal qualities like responsibility for and activity in the project and an aim for changing society.

partnership is as mentioned in chapter 3.4.1 a criterion for funding from both the MFA and the Barents Secretariat. The value of trust as a foundation for continuity in a partnership is embedded in such a criterion.

There is not always a complete overlap between the official Norwegian criteria and the various criteria of the partners. Inconsistency with the government's guidelines indicates that the independence which CSOs claim from government policies does to some degree exist, despite the close state-CSO collaboration in the Norwegian Model described in chapter 3. Operational support is an area of repeated discrepancy, as shown in the following quote by a representative of Natur og Ungdom (NU). She also expresses discontentment with the focus on efficiency and result orientation that the projects must be based on in order to achieve funding.

Project support is the trend. It is no longer possible to get operational support. But it is important for democratic organisational development, so we want to support operation costs as well. We also support one permanent position. Projects have to be so apolitical; nobody wants to approve a project with political content. Efficiency is furthermore not always possible, but it is efficiency that projects are based on. (Martinussen 2007 [interview])

So far the Norwegian actors that supply funding have shown that they have some criteria and expectations of their partners and of how funding is to be used. The most frequent criteria of the Norwegian CSOs seem to follow the guidelines of the MFA and the Barents Secretariat, although not in all cases. The next step towards a verification or falsification of H1 is looking into how the projects and partnerships are structured and how the CSOs emphasise long- and short-term components.

5.1.2 Long-term development

Horizontal networks of civic engagement within the Russian CSO environment are a sign of long-term development.³⁹ *Information sharing* between the Russian CSOs in the study appears to be rather scarce. Since collaboration among the actors in civil society will be a reoccurring theme in the discussion of the next hypothesis H2, I will not elaborate too much on that here. I will however point to my impression that direct information sharing in Arkhangelsk seems to be stronger than in Murmansk. The information shared was mostly provided by Arkhangelsk Centre for Social Technologies Garant or it was based on personal contact with other activists. There did not seem to be any highly structured exchange of information between the organisations, such as a database of current projects. The Arkhangelsk ‘NGO leaders’ club’ that gathers once a month to exchange experiences is closest to an institutionalised form of CSO information sharing. In Murmansk some CSOs send newsletters to each other and keep web pages, and have contact with other CSO actors through personal relationships and through meetings arranged by the regional administration.

Formal or informal *network building* between civil society actors is an extended form of information sharing. Initiative to network building seems to come from Garant in Arkhangelsk, from the oblast administration in Murmansk (that arranges monthly meetings for regional CSOs), and in some degree from the regional Barents Secretariat offices, which organise events where Russian CSOs meet to learn about Norwegian funding possibilities. In this context, network building is not a phenomenon mainly operated by the CSOs themselves. The monthly forums organised by the administration or the seminars by the Barents Secretariat are part of an outside framework and are thus not an expression of civil society organising itself.

³⁹ See chapter 2.4.1 for corresponding theory and operationalisations of the terms in this section.

Which actors are suited to unite civil society: authorities or CSOs themselves? On the one hand civil society is perceived as weak if it is not capable of developing by itself. On the other hand civil society has better conditions to blossom in a society positive to CSO activity. In Russia, it can be perceived as positive to the CSOs that they are officially supported by the administration, and yet it might also make CSOs seem dependent on the authorities when they actually want to represent an opposition movement. Both CSOs and authorities work to unite civil society, although far from all officials are as positive to CSOs as the Murmansk administration gives the impression of being. I will return to this subject in the discussion of the final hypothesis.

Some CSOs express the wish for closer interaction with other groups, and have thoughts about the absence of a unity in the community. The leader of Arkhangelsk NGO Bridges of Mercy describes the relationship with other CSOs in Arkhangelsk like this: ‘We are pretty isolated. We have common seminars, but we are not united, our strengths are not united in one power’ (Danilova 2007 [interview]). Networks are with few exceptions only between organisations that share the same goals and issues, like indigenous peoples’ networks, youth organisations’ networks, ENGOs’ networks and disabled children NGOs with other interest groups for disabled. The indigenous peoples’ and the environmentalists’ issues have a tendency to overlap as both groups try to protect the same land.

Regarding the oil pipeline from the Western Sibiria to Murmansk, we wanted to state that we disagreed, but it is dangerous to stand up alone against the big oil companies. We are not crazy! That’s why we formed the Northern Coalition.⁴⁰ We also work with another, international coalition of environmental organisations that used to exist in different Soviet states. It’s the Social Ecological Union, the one created by Lenin. (...) We also collaborate with the Hope centre for homeless children in Apatity and with the indigenous peoples’

⁴⁰ Established in 2003, the Northern Coalition consists of the ENGOs World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Bellona Murmansk, Gaia, The Kola Biodiversity Conservation Centre (in Apatity) and Priroda i Molodsh (PiM).

organisations on issues that concern them too because of the areas where they live.

(Kruglikova 2007 [interview])

Networking seems important to the Norwegian partners. For example, NU emphasise the ENGO network in North-West Russia in their projects, and the Norwegian Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities of Nordland (NFU) has recently received a MFA grant for a larger networking project between Russian CSOs for disabled. The Norwegian partners and funders associate a connected civil society with a strong civil society, in that it is easier to be heard if the choir is large and unanimous. Still, strong civil society networks seem absent both in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. What might be the reason for this? I found discrepancies between statements of how well developed the networks really are within the same city, depending on the type of organisation interviewed. The interview data indicate that the ENGOS have the best network amongst themselves, and that many of the other CSOs have such scattered interests that they do not invest the time and effort needed for a network to function. Another possible explanation could be one of self-preservation, i.e. the organisations compete against each other for the funding that is offered through grant competitions and partners. This assumption is discussed in section 5.2.

Trust traced amongst the activists in different organisations comes from personal relationships. Personal connections seem to be highly important to several aspects of civil society work, as will be shown in the discussion of H3. Trust is also essential for networking, as is illustrated in this quote by Arkhangelsk CSO Rassvet's representative.

[The relationship to other NGOs in the area is] good. We cooperate on common events. Garant makes evaluations of us. We have seminars. We invite each other to participate in NGO meetings, for instance. We call each other. We share opinions. We cooperate with the NGOs that we trust and the rest we just don't have any contact with. (Popkova 2007 [interview])

Civic engagement between the CSOs and the population is another important ingredient in the long-term aspect of civil society development. It seems that public *information*

circulation is of much greater importance to the organisations than information shared with other CSOs. The CSOs make brochures, organise gatherings, appear on the radio and TV, have actions, courses, lectures and legal consultations, do surveys to understand public opinion, make and distribute newspapers, and arrange festivals and summer camps. Such *community activity* is part of all the organisations' work, especially in the form of different types of seminars with education purposes for a target group in the local community. Community courses and seminars are also seen as means to educate people so that they know about their rights and how to use and defend them.

The projects often have a *local agenda* – where people in the community teach each other to further develop the community. This is not to say that project ideas always come solely from local initiative. The idea of voluntary centres, for example, came from the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA). The Norwegian Consul General underlines that although based on a Norwegian idea the voluntary centres in Murmansk could never be like they are in Norway, since they have been developed with a Russian understanding (Aasheim 2007 [interview]). The different cultural and societal grounds on which voluntary establishments stand in Russia and in Norway are emphasised by several Norwegian actors.

The CSOs' *influence on authorities' decision making* is also an important component in the long-term development of an active and influential civil society. Most of the Russian CSO actors do not think that they have actual influence on political decision making. They feel that it is hard to get the authorities to see things their way. Nevertheless, they aim for influence through hearings, working groups and more direct contact with authorities, and there are some success stories on both local and federal levels.

Three federal laws related to indigenous peoples' rights were implemented in 1999, 2000 and 2001. So we have influence. But laws here don't work in reality. There has not been a practical mechanism implemented to realise the laws. We are pushing for that now. (Dordina 2007 [interview])

The discrepancy between decisions made and results reached came up in several interviews.

We try to influence decision making, but sometimes the problems are not solved just because the decisions are made. Take the meeting that PiM had with the governor e.g. – the one where the leader of PiM met the governor on a plane and invited to a round table meeting. They reached an agreement that by 2020 there will be 20% wind energy in the total energy production. Working groups have been made. But is this realistic? (Kruglikova 2007 [interview])

Bellona Murmansk's representative shows an even deeper lack of expectation from the same event between the youth ENGO Priroda i Molodezh (PiM) and the governor of Murmansk, as she states that 'I think it was a good PR stunt from the governor to meet with PiM. I do not see it as a development in any direction' (Kireeva 2007 [interview]). Getting the authorities' attention is according to this view not the same as influencing them. This division will be made more evident in the third section of this chapter.

A final long-term dimension I use is the dedication to a CSO's issues through *voluntary work*. Volunteers are an extensive part of all the CSOs that I interviewed, with exception from Bellona, Raipon and the New Eurasia Foundation (FNE). It varies, however, how many volunteers and employees there are and it is usual to get salary on a project basis, i.e. the responsible person for the project gets compensation for the work she puts in this particular project. The division between the volunteers and paid staff is rather hazy due to this, and so is the division between long- and short-term aspects of being dedicated to an issue and making a living from it. There does not have to be a strict division between the two, although in accordance with my operationalisations, salaries financed by project represent short-term gains.

5.1.3 Short-term benefits

Financial compensations in form of project specific *salaries* may well come from funding. In addition, the youth ENGOs PiM and Aetas receive means from NU to employ a secretary and use an external bookkeeper. Other than this the funding does not support salaries explicitly. Nevertheless, in cases where foreign funding is the only income that the organisation has, it is also used to pay the employees' salary.

Administrative tasks (paper work, such as registrations, reports, databases, and personnel administration) would typically be handled by one particular person in charge of such work or again be part of a person's project-related responsibility. Most CSO-representatives underline the importance of administrative work in general, and report work in particular. The questionnaire asks how many hours a month they normally spend on administrative tasks, and the answers vary between three days and an entire month, the average time being about one week. Most funders are not too eager to give support to administrative tasks,⁴¹ even though the need for such work is obvious. It seems that the Norwegian CSOs expect their Russian partners to find alternative ways of paying for this. Some partners had withdrawn earlier funding to administration; e.g. Bellona used to get funding for administrative tasks and office expenses, but they now no longer do. The underlying idea seems to be that this is a step in the direction of stronger, more independent Russian CSOs.

The largest portion of time spent on administration is devoured by *report writing*. The most extensive reports go to the Russian Federal Registration Service (*Rosregistratsia*) that demands thorough reports from all registered Russian NGOs in accordance with the NGO law of 2006. Consequences of the new law include longer and more sweeping reports from the NGOs every year. One CSO actually presents itself as a project under another association to avoid all the extra paperwork and tax rules that registering as an

⁴¹ NU and the Sami Mission are the exceptions.

NGO would imply. Report writing especially takes time in larger organisations with many projects, and the amount of paperwork directed at Russian government can be so large it affects the organisations' effectiveness on target areas. Time is an important factor, and if it is consumed by bureaucratic procedures it cannot be spent on networking or other activities that would support civil society on a long-term basis.

Reports also go to Norwegian partners, mostly annually, and finally there are reports that are written for the Barents Secretariat or for the MFA from both Russian and Norwegian organisations. Time spent on reporting back to the Norwegians is between two and 528 hours a month; in other words there are great differences depending on the size of the organisation and the number of funded projects. There is clearly a difference between fruitful reporting and excessive reporting. The overall impression I got from the Russian CSOs was one of resigned frustration over the work load that came with the new Russian demands for reports and documentation according to the new NGO law. Reports to partner CSOs and Norwegian funders (in English or Norwegian) were much less demanding, despite the fact that report writing in a foreign language is usually more time consuming.

All organisations but two had received funding for *technical equipment*, and the majority had applied directly for this kind of support. Mostly such support was requested and given in the very beginning of a partnership when many Russian CSOs needed assistance to start up an office and activities.

Internal seminars or meetings are a common feature in all the Russian CSOs except for Bellona. These could be annual or more frequent meetings, training of volunteers, strategy seminars with themes like funding and effective use of resources, etc. Common for these internal activities is that they do not reach out to the wider public or to other CSOs and thus have no long-term perspective of development. Nevertheless, internal meetings are often part of the project scheme and thus funded. Annual meetings are not so popular with the Barents Secretariat, and therefore they tend to be given different labels in the applications, such as "seminar" or "conference". I wonder why it is necessary to

disguise annual meetings like this if everybody involved, including the funders, knows what a “seminar” that appears once a year means. This could be the product of an underlying goal orientation in the funding. Annual meetings rarely lead to anything concrete. Wrapping them up in funder-friendly paper is a way around an unwelcome criterion.

5.1.4 Conclusion to H1

This section has outlined how criteria and expectations of Norwegian funders and partners correspond with existing long- and short-term incentives of the North-West Russian CSOs. Especially CSO networking is emphasised and described as limited in Russian civil society, yet important for Norwegian partners. Short-term benefits are furthermore described as relevant and frequent. As I expected, I found that Russian CSOs were encouraged by Norwegian criteria to pursue projects with short-term benefits. Additionally I found that the CSOs’ aimed for the contrary: long-term civic development. Norwegian assistance to CSOs operating in North-West Russia does indeed seem to encourage the CSOs to pursue short-term benefits, but not necessarily *over* or instead of long-term development. By this I mean that the driving force of the CSOs work and existence collectively appears to be a long-term incentive to change parts of society. Whether environmental protection, women’s or indigenous peoples’ rights, freedom of press, youth awareness, or more social work related issues; the ideas on which such projects and funding are based have long-term goals. The way towards these goals can be an impractical one if basic short-term needs are not covered. In this way the short-term incentives can go hand-in-hand with more long-term development. Reports, for example, are ultimately feedback that is supposed to benefit future projects, and internal seminars can just as well be beneficial in the long run, if the participants learn to become more effective and including in their activities.

The hypothesis must be considered in a certain timeframe. Within the short-term timeframe of a standard project (with funding for one year at the time), the funder clearly emphasises criteria encouraging short-term, countable results. H1 does on the other hand not seem to be relevant in a larger timeframe of an entire partnership. In a partnership perspective over several years, the progress of civil society through long-term goals is superior to short-term project goals. Is it then correct to confirm or to reject H1? Norwegian funding criteria to CSOs operating in North-West Russia does clearly encourage both the Norwegian CSOs and their Russian partners to pursue short-term benefits over long-term development within the project timeframe. Since “Norwegian assistance” is operationalised as funding through the Project Cooperation with Russia, H1 must be interpreted in the short-term view of project funding. Although the short-term benefits do not have to contradict the long-term goals, it is correct to confirm H1 in the given project view: Norwegian assistance to CSOs operating in North-West Russia indeed encourages the CSOs to pursue short-term benefits over long-term development.

5.2 Partnerships – all about money?

The second assumption that theory on foreign funding gave me was that organisations with the longest history of Norwegian-oriented agendas would receive the trust of the Norwegian funders and partners, thus creating a competition between the CSOs to adjust to Norwegian models of civil society activity. The initial conceptualisation of the key expression “Norwegian models of civil society activity” was set in chapter 2.4.2. In this section I will reveal the more comprehensive understanding based on characteristics provided by Norwegian civil society actors. Overall I found rather contradictory evidence to what partnerships with Norwegian CSOs mean for Russian agendas, attitudes, competition and adjustment to external ideas of civil society activity.

5.2.1 Models of civil society activity

What are Norwegian models of civil society activity? I tried to grasp this by asking about CSO activity and local civil society norms. The answers drew a picture of a Norwegian emphasis on democratic organisations and growing focus on project work, but also of the importance of individual forces and of collaboration between organisations on subject matters. Voluntary involvement was also mentioned as a feature of the common Norwegian civil society. How do Russian organisations adapt to such ideals, and to what degree? The data presented in chapter 5.1 has shown that Norwegian organisations appreciate sharing basic values with their partners. Although there is an appreciation of differences in societies and cultures, there is also a strong motivation for societal change towards a liberal understanding of democracy. This seems to be a paradox within Norwegian funding policy. Some organisations recognise the need to adapt to the expectations of their funders.

To find a suitable fund and write an application in the way that they want it [is important when elaborating a project proposal to a foreign organisation]. Then you will have success. The applicants should adapt their projects to the fund's requirements. (Kireeva 2007 [interview])

What does it mean that there are such adaptations? Are they an expression of alteration of own ideals in order to achieve monetary support? Or is it like the “undercover annual meetings” just a way of wrapping things up to make them presentable? An adoption of the funder's ideals would imply that the Russian organisation is nothing but a mere Norwegian puppet on the civil society scene. The authorities in Murmansk have indeed accused Bellona Murmansk of this. In Arkhangelsk the members of Aetas, another ENGO, were accused of being spies for the Norwegians. In other words, this is a perception cultivated by Russian authorities about organisations that are known for their critical voice against government decisions about nuclear energy and protection of natural resources – issues of economic importance. Adaptations in accordance with a fund's

requirements do not have to alter the underlying ideals. Based on the projects run by the different organisations, I doubt that they do. Often the ideals of the partners are very similar, and are even the very foundation of the partnership.

I traced a difference between Russian and Norwegian understandings on some key subjects. Many organisations even mentioned “differences in mentality” as a main challenge in the collaboration. The Northern Feminist University (KUN) had this experience from working with Russian women’s rights organisations.

What you could talk about in relation to sexuality and violence [was challenging]. The feminist movement in Russia had a few introductions with a very clear message. But in discussions it was a challenge to know how far you could go. They had a different view on the use of sexuality in relation to women’s career opportunities, for instance. Not to let oneself be provoked and respect their view was a challenge. (Stemland 2007 [phone interview])

A Norwegian CSO representative operating in the Murmansk region sets out this metaphor on differences and similarities in culture and mentality.

[Russian mentality is] like a key card, with those holes, that is put over a Norwegian key card. Some of the holes will overlap. In this way there will be a common understanding on some points, but not a common pattern or understanding that is equal for the entire card – nor for the entire way of thinking, neither on gender equality nor freedom of press. (Giskegjerde 2007 [interview])

Which holes overlap? Some indications were given by the interviewees. The leader of the women’s network CWKP in Murmansk told me that ‘women from the Norwegian Labour Party became a great example, a light for us in 1994-98. It was a hard period and we needed good examples’ (Parshkova 2007 [interview]). Seeing Norwegian ways as a source of role models clearly reflects a Norwegian-oriented attitude.

Norwegian civil society ideas are also transferred because the Norwegian organisations are seen as more experienced, and more plausible to succeed because of prior success in Western countries. Several Russian NGOs have adopted a model of democratic

organisation from Norwegian partners, and Russian law requires a member base for an organisation to register as an NGO. Does this implicate that a democratic organisation is actually considered necessary by the Russians? The following quotations illustrating attitudes of organisation are extracted from two interviews of the partner ENGOS Gaia and NNF.

If you are registered as an NGO in Russia you have to be member-based – at least 3 members are required. We have about 50, but only ca. 11 pay the annual fee that we just started to collect (300 roubles). About another 50 collaborate on projects, but they do not want to become members. It is not a priority for us to have them as members either, as long as they are involved. (Kruglikova 2007 [interview])

It has been a challenge that they [Gaia] are developing a member-based organisation. They think it is not important. We want them to see that bigger structures give more power to influence. Democratic organisation is important. Broad popular participation is created this way. (Lorentzen 2007 [interview])

5.2.2 Understanding of civil society and democracy

I asked all of the interviewees about their understanding of civil society and democratic rights. A third of the Norwegian interviewees connected democratic structure of the organisation directly with civil society, and more than half linked civil society with various democratic rights. The Russian answers were similar in some ways, especially on the connection between civil society and democratic rights. However, many Russian interviewees began to speak of problems of a weak civil society: people's passivity in society due to authoritarian mentality passed on from the Soviet system; lack of popular support for CSOs; and the gap between what people want to do, what they actually do and what the government will let them do.

Sami civil society reflects all of what is happening in the big Russian civil society: People do not feel responsible and they are not active, only in parts. Some look to authorities and think of what the authorities might do, before they act. (...) [Democratic rights] depend on the level

of civil society – on how grown up it is. Generally, we are like a newborn; the civil society is newborn. We know about democratic rights but they are something new. It is like this: we tried to get it, we got it, but we don't know what to do with it. (Prakhova 2007 [interview])

Generational differences are above all traceable in the way the interviewees talk about civil society. Older generations that lived in the USSR are more negative towards rapid societal change and they share less of the Norwegian perspectives on democratic rights and civil society. Younger generations of civil society activists that grew up during the 1980s and 1990s see themselves as the new hope for a change of mentality. These two quotes illustrate a cleavage with positive potential for future development of civil society in Russia:

[Democratic rights] is even worse to define than civil society! If I had been younger then maybe I could have said something based on young hope. (Sedovina 2007 [interview])

The newspaper [that we make] is good for the youth, because it will take a generation change to change this situation. Youth in Russia now is quite different – the way they think and act. They are not part of the collective, they are individuals. They have bigger success and can travel and discover opportunities. Soviet people are suspicious, they do not believe in freedom. (Vetsko 2007 [interview])

I asked the Russian civil society actors what they thought of foreign funding, and the answers gave the impression that foreign funding is still necessary for the CSOs' survival, and that this is unfortunate because the Russian state should be more inclusive to civil society. Naturally most interviewees are positive to the funding they themselves are receivers of. They see that funding can give economic strength to action and influence, but some also underline downsides, i.e. that funding can attract actors not interested in the issues as much as in the money. Furthermore, positively perceived developments of CSOs in society, like more independence from authorities and more influence on political decision making, are repeatedly linked with the opportunities opened by foreign funding.

According to the oldest CSOs, foreign funding seems to be decreasing in the north-western regions. This can simply imply that there is now less money for the CSOs than before. Conversely it can indicate that the Russian CSOs are getting more Russian funding and thus are becoming more independent from foreign support. The federal Russian forums for civil society funding and networking drew a mixed response on the subject of Russian support. The Civic Chamber is mostly seen as an artificial construction that has no real power, but that it is better to have this than not to have anything. A continuous need for both foreign and Russian backing of general system changes in addition to mere projects is clearly expressed.

I also asked for the Norwegians' understandings of Russian civil society. The answers varied greatly, but there were several comments on differences from Norwegian civil society, i.e. that Russians had more respect for authorities and experts, and less economic resources. Norwegian opinions on democratic development on Russian federal level can be summed up as cautiously negative, especially to the increasing centralisation and control of the Kremlin. The understanding of such developments on the level of North-West Russian *regional* government is however more optimistic.

Long-term development results are reached more slowly than some Norwegian partners hoped for in the beginning. There is a time for everything, I have been told over and over again. It does not seem that the time for democratic optimism would be now. Norwegian actors' understanding of their own role in this development is nevertheless quite confident. I often asked if they believed that they were part of creating democratic awareness. Most Norwegian CSOs indeed believe this, and they often assumed that I was asking about their work exclusively in Russian society. Moreover I asked if changes in Russian society had affected the project collaborations. Some did not think so, while others mentioned negative effects of new laws and political centralisation of power. One Norwegian actor flipped it around and told me that 'changes were usually initiated by us, not the other way around'.

5.2.3 Weight of history

Cross-border history seems to be repeating itself with the ongoing collaborations. Either the partners met years ago or they met based on prior engagements between other Norwegian or Russian organisations. Relationships directly passed-on occurred only with the FNE, that had ‘inherited the cooperation from the American Eurasia Foundation in 1999’ (Moshkova 2007 [interview]). Some of the collaborations were characterised as coincidences that sprung out of prior engagements. Most Norwegian CSOs that today collaborate with Russian organisations have been involved with Russian civil society work since the first years after the break-up of the Soviet Union.

The history of Russian CSOs’ financial collaboration with foreigners was measured in the questionnaire. Ten out of a total of thirteen organisations had been receiving Norwegian funding since they started to receive foreign funding.⁴² Seven out of these ten organisations received the funding since they were founded or even before. The organisations that now receive funding have been doing so for a minimum of six years.⁴³ This funding history indicates how the relationship between Norwegian and North-West Russian CSOs has been fairly constant during post-Soviet times, and makes out a common history of cooperation.

The long history in itself is an interesting feature; what does it indicate that there have been no recent additions to the partnerships? On the one hand, it can be a sign of an integrated and stable CSO community that has settled considerably after the volatile NGO landscape in the 1990s. In this scenario there are no new relationships because there are no new actors that wish to establish them. Observations on NGO development in

⁴² Various countries and programmes were funding the CSOs I interviewed in North-West Russia. Some examples are: the EU’s programme of technical assistance to CIS countries (TACIS), the Swedish international development cooperation agency Sida, the Danish and the Finnish Foreign Ministries, and the American Ford Foundation and Eurasia Foundation.

⁴³ The American Eurasia Foundation operated in Russia from 1993. The foundation had to register as a Russian NGO in 2004 due to the new NGO regulations, and the *New* Eurasia Foundation (FNE) overtook the cooperation with the Barents Secretariat and MFA. This extension of the collaboration has thus naturally a shorter history than six years.

Arkhangelsk indicate that the NGO flora has decreased since the year 2000 (Danilova 2007 [interview]). This certainly gives some backing for the suppositional explanation as to why there were no known new Russian-Norwegian partnerships working with projects of civil society and democratic development. On the other hand the established partnerships can form a closed door for new actors that wish to develop cross-border projects. So can the requirements of an established partnership in advance for obtaining Norwegian grants, because it encourages continuing with the same partners.

I asked how the relationship had developed over time, and got answers that indicate a development from funder-receiver relationships to partnerships and more independence for the Russian organisations. This eco-activist sees his ENGO's growing independence from the Norwegian partner NU as an indispensable consequence of living and operating in two so different societies:

[Different mentalities] influence everything. We are both environmental organisations, but we are in different situations. They don't understand everything that is going on in Russia. Norway is an ideal for us – but it might not be so [for you]? In the beginning it was more of a mother and child relationship (money, advice). But the child is different from the parent. The surroundings are so different. It's social [differences]! (Nesterov 2007 [interview])

5.2.4 Trust and competition

Trust and funding are intertwined in a pretty obvious way – the organisations receiving funding are also trusted. Nobody would support someone they didn't believe would spend that money fairly and wisely. The Norwegians seem to believe that the funding is necessary for developing the aspects of Russian society that they are interested in. Since there is limited funding and several CSOs dependant on it, it is reasonable to assume that there would be a certain competition about the grants. After all, the very words “grant competition” are used to describe the foundations' way of choosing projects to support. Nevertheless, I found no openness about this aspect of the CSOs' relationship to one another neither in Murmansk nor in Arkhangelsk.

As shown in chapter 5.1, civil society activist networks are not well developed. Little cooperation does not automatically mean much competition, but the question does come to mind. Is there competition or rivalry over the same funding? The Russian organisations did not tell me about difficulties amongst them, but rather gave me the innocent version. I can only assume that this reticence had something to do with my origin as a Norwegian student who collaborated with the Barents Institute. Is there just harmony between Russian CSOs seeking partners' support? Quite the opposite version was given by two Norwegian actors who underline the difficulties that a competition between the Russian CSOs implied.

The NGOs compete with each other over project funding. There is no particular network between them. They are on the border of existence and they need all means from outside to survive. (Karlsen 2007 [interview])

Also [our projects are having a bit of a hard time with] the enormous competition within [the Russian community] to find western partners and build [an organisation]. It has not always been so professionally oriented. We noticed that, and sometimes it has limited the project development since we didn't get in touch with the people that we could have obtained contact with. After a while I've found out that territorial thinking is quite extensive in Norwegian environments as well – to make a living. (Ingebrigtsen 2007 [interview])

5.2.5 Conclusion to H2

This section has shown that all the Russian organisations have a longer history with Norwegians than six years, and they seem to develop attitudes more in correspondence with their partners' as time goes by. Trust is a tricky term to measure, but in this case it has been straightforward to connect trust with repeated funding and prolonged collaboration; the established partners are continuing relationships with people and organisations that they trust from experience. Partnerships are established firmly over time. This seems to be a point that the MFA and the Barents Secretariat has taken into account and implemented as a criterion for funding. At the same time it indicates that new

partnerships are not encouraged. The Russian-Norwegian history of CSO cooperation also shows a development from funder-receiver relationships to partnerships and more Russian independence from the Norwegian supporter.

Time of cooperation is furthermore a factor when Norwegian attitudes are transferred to Russian reality. Several organisations have adapted the organisational structure of a Norwegian democratic ideal. Some of the Russian CSOs, like Bellona Murmansk and PiM, were in fact created by Norwegian CSOs. It is not surprising that their ideals then overlap. But other Russian CSOs were already established before meeting Norwegian partners, and these must truly adapt to another way of thinking. In case they do adapt to an ideal Norwegian organisational structure, it may be for several reasons. One is of course because the restructuring actually improves the organisational structure. Another reason is that it improves the relationship to the partner. It is not possible to distinguish any clear tendencies here based on my data. Nevertheless, it is a question of importance on what ground Norwegian influence on North-West Russian civil society actors is received. If the democratic organisation is a forced structure, it is not likely to stay with the Russians after the Norwegians pull out of the cooperation.

The evidence of this chapter has shown that CSOs with the longest history of Norwegian-oriented outlook do indeed receive the trust of the Norwegian funders and partners. I have focused on certain Norwegian-oriented attitudes when it comes to democratic understandings of organisational structure, equality of the sexes, openness in society, and environment protection. “Differences of mentality” especially becomes obvious when comparing attitudes of the way societal structures should be, but not so much when comparing the very understanding of a civil society or of democratic rights. It is worth repeating that many organisations mention differences in mentality as a challenge in the collaboration.

Does this first part of H2 actually ‘create a competition between CSOs to adjust to Norwegian models of civil society activity’? I have no reason to believe so, because there is no evidence that can support such a causal relationship. Both the first and the second

part of H2 are supported by data, although Russian and Norwegian data do not overlap when it comes to statements of competition among the Russian civil society actors. The fact that the second part of H2 is met with this discrepancy may imply a methodological problem as well, as mentioned in 4.3. There is not enough evidence to confirm H2's second part, nor is there any evidence for the causality proposed by the hypothesis. For these two reasons I reject H2: although CSOs with the longest history of Norwegian-oriented agendas do receive the trust of the Norwegian funders and partners, there is not an obvious competition between the CSOs to adjust to Norwegian models of civil society activity, nor is there evidence for the causal connection proposed in H2.

5.3 Government and civil society

My last theoretical assumption is that in North-West Russia the level of cooperation between authorities and CSOs is high, and this has a positive influence on the CSOs realisation of Norwegian-oriented agendas. In order to evaluate the value of such a hypothesis I need to consider some of the factors discussed in the previous sections of this analysis. Norwegian-oriented agendas can be reflected in goals shared with Norwegian partners, and these vary greatly, from building a democratic organisation to developing consciousness about legal rights and actually using these rights to improve living conditions. How does the cooperation with authorities affect the agenda realisation – when some CSOs feel that they are in opposition to authorities, while others feel that they work closely with the system for the common good of society as a whole? A few tendencies can be sketched from the answers given.

5.3.1 Different authorities, different cooperation

One important difference between the federal, the regional and the city authorities is pointed out by the Norwegian Consul General: the regional authorities are not dependent on permissions from Moscow, so it is easier to cooperate with them than with the city

authorities or the federal authorities and their regional representatives (Aasheim 2007 [interview]). A general regional independence from the federal authorities still seems to be applicable despite the reforms made to decrease the governors' powers. In contrast, Russian youth organisations seem to have a better relationship with the local than with the regional authorities.

There are no protected areas here, and when we address [this] and suggest such a thing as forest protection, the regional authorities accuse us of being spies for the Norwegians – it's true! With the city authorities we have a better relationship, they try to support us. We have a youth Soviet here with many youth politicians, but very few NGO representatives. We try to be a part of it, but as of now we have not succeeded. (...) We have meetings with the major, but he does not always understand the questions we ask him. Nevertheless, he is the first major who has tried to meet with young people here. (Kolodii 2007 [interview])

Federal government is often referred to as remote, yet in the end responsible. In the office of a CSO there was a poster from Journalists without Frontiers. "Predators of the Press" is the headline. Putin is shown next to a picture of Charles Taylor in Liberia and Lukashenko in Belarus. This kind of direct critique is however atypical, even of federal authorities. On regional and local level, CSOs generally have a dialogue with the authorities, where they join forces or openly disagree with each other depending on the issues.

5.3.2 High and low level of cooperation

The Russian CSOs mainly see a positive development in the relationship to regional and local authorities within social aid and education projects as well as environment protection projects. Constructive meetings with the major of Arkhangelsk and the governor of Murmansk are examples of new experiences for green activists. Also Norwegian CSOs give the impression of a positive development. The Norwegian Helsinki Committee organises "human rights schools" within an educational framework in Murmansk. Murmansk regional public relations office has been a great help to them as a

gatekeeper to obtain official support. Although they had to wait a year for the governor's blessing, the practicalities of the courses were a success thanks to assistance from the regional administration. A good collaboration with the regional government opens opportunities that the CSOs alone cannot provide.

After a while we have experienced that collaboration with the authorities in Murmansk is not controversial. Then it is not hard for us [to collaborate]. Actually we have experienced that they do what they promise and are responsible. (...) The authorities have more influence than the NGOs. Parshkova [leader of the regional public relations office] gets us 14 people that will talk about human rights, of which six are in uniform. This we could never have gotten through an NGO. (Djuliman 2007 [interview])

On the other hand, impressions were sometimes rather negative. Although channels of interaction were open and functioning, the flow of communication was often seen as a one-way stream.

I do think, quite personally, that it was difficult to get them [the officials] to listen. They were occupied with presenting their case. It was opulently presented, they gave a nicer image than the one you had in your head. They were concerned with presenting the sunny side, not with listening and finding the way ahead. (Hutchinson 2007 [interview])

The feeling of being listened to but not heard was expressed on several occasions by the Russian CSOs too. Counter-arguments from authorities have been that specific societal problems do not exist in *their* region. CSOs that have heard such statements are working with problems like nuclear power development, violence against women, and child prostitution. Rejecting an actual societal problem by labelling it “non-existent” is an easy way around it. Persistent CSOs have a lot to do with seeking even basic acknowledgement of regional societal problems. This can be seen as part of the previously mentioned new openness in Russian society.

Differences as well as similarities between the regions and the towns can be traced. Both Murmansk and Arkhangelsk seem to have mechanisms for interaction with advocates of civil society activity, although somewhat varying in form. As mentioned, the regional

public relations office organises monthly forums for the CSOs in Murmansk, where they are to discuss problems with other CSOs and with invited representatives of the regional government (Pashkova 2007 [interview]). There is also a fund for regional organisations in the Murmansk regional budget. The overall impression I got from the CSOs in the two regions was that the Murmansk regional administration had a more elaborated interaction with CSOs. The fact that Murmansk also has the largest military presence and a strong tradition of government control of every aspect of society might be a separate factor affecting the same outcome. Could the high level of government involvement here also reflect traditions of state control in a new function? It is worth having in mind when comparing regions that the regional history influences contemporary regional development just as the nationwide history influences the general civil society development described in chapter 2.

In Arkhangelsk it is the CSO Garant that acts as the main intermediary between different CSOs, and between CSOs, the local authorities and the businesses. They also have a special city programme with the local budget which implies that the city budget contributes with 50 percent of the charitable fund for grants that is administered by Garant.⁴⁴ The fact that I did not speak with an Arkhangelsk government representative has likely affected the impression I have of less collaborative activity between CSOs and the regional government there. However, I discussed CSO-authority cooperation extensively with the CSOs (especially Garant) and asked the local Barents Secretariat office about mechanisms of cooperation. By doing this I hope to avoid inconsistency. The larger organisations in Moscow point out some regional differences that they have noticed. Indigenous peoples' NGO Raipon has observed that

⁴⁴ There is an agreement with the local government that the budget is to provide an amount of some 2 million roubles and Garant is to raise the equal amount from private sponsors. Foreign funding to Garant is to maintain the organisation with salaries, equipment, and cover activities and administrative expenses.

In some regions there is a good cooperation with the government and in others they always say that they have no authority to support us. It all depends on how strong the indigenous peoples' movement is in the region and how good the will of the government is. In North-West Russia it is hard, and in Nenets the indigenous peoples groups have very little contact with the government. In Murmansk it is also hard. (Dordina 2007 [interview])

5.3.3 Influential collaboration

Are goals hard to reach when the CSOs do not collaborate with authorities on a high level? It depends of course on how much the CSOs directly try to influence the authorities and how dependent their issues are of a governmental blessing. Naturally, CSOs that experience difficulties in interaction with authorities also have problems reaching their goals of influencing political decisions. ENGOs are often in opposition to official standpoints, so collaborating with authorities can be a challenge. Bellona Murmansk exemplifies this tendency.

[Our goal is] public participation in environmental questions. The Russian situation is that the government is concealing some issues. This goes for any public issue. The government talks about project developments but then they should come to public hearings and listen and be asked uncomfortable questions. And the public should hear this. The contact with the government is difficult – they don't want to let us be involved. (Kireeva 2007 [interview])

Bellona also has a hard time obtaining local funding 'mostly because we have the reputation of being Norwegian-oriented' (Lesikhina 2007 [interview]). The same goes for the previously mentioned case with the youth activists of Aetas who were accused of being spies for the Norwegians. Norwegian-oriented agendas do not necessarily inspire a positive reaction from the authorities. These cases are noticeably ENGOs that have many goals of changing environmental politics in their regions. Other organisations that have an economical-political undertone in their issues, such as environment protection, indigenous peoples' rights, and foreign influenced organisations that aim to change Russian society, also told me about very low level of cooperation and governmental non-collaboration and

even hostility towards them. The pro-American foundation FNE stands as an example of the latter.

Before we were perceived as an organisation with negative attitudes towards the Russian government. We were partly blamed for the orange revolution in Ukraine. This was black PR that appeared in the regional and federal press. So as a result we didn't have a chance to develop many projects at that time – because we want them to be implemented in society. The political situation was given as the reason for non-collaboration with us in many ministries. (Moshkova 2007 [interview])

Projects with a social aid aspect are on the other hand the ones most prone to cooperate well with and receive support from various levels of Russian government. Attitudes towards CSOs with Norwegian-oriented agendas thus seem to be related to the CSO's activity and issues. In the social aid projects, official institutions could even take over responsibilities from CSOs, continuing the realisation of project goals as part of public service. This was the case with a project between the NPA and Bridges of Mercy.

We did the same [start activity centres for the elderly] in the village, we sent volunteers there. After a year we became friends with the government and they sent an employee there. In this way an idea lives on. (...) We have regular collaboration [with the government]. But there is one thing I don't like: I go to them, but they rarely come to me. That means that they don't see us as a force. We mustn't think that they are our hope. We must think that *we* can be useful to society. Norwegian money was spent to renovate the centre for the elderly, which is a communal building! (Danilova 2007 [interview])

According to the FNE, every region wants to show to some target program that it solves special regional problems. If the issues of the CSOs are within this regional scope, the CSOs have a greater chance of getting political goodwill for their causes (Moshkova 2007 [interview]). Social aid issues seem to prevail over environmental issues on the agenda of regional priorities in both Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, although the youth environmentalists I interviewed in both regions are reporting a more collaborative spirit from the authorities now than ever before.

Does good cooperation with government imply a more influential civil society? The question was raised by Gaia's representative who had an overall good relation to the local authorities in Apatity and the Murmansk authorities. She questions the democratic value of collaboration when it is only on the terms of the authorities.

We call if we want to meet with somebody [in both the regional and local administration]. The governor has a tight schedule, so then we must call in advance. It is much more open and democratic here in Apatity than in Alta, we were told when we were in Alta with the NNF. But then the question is if this has got [something] to do with democracy; that you always have to ask the major for permission? (Kruglikova 2007 [interview])

When influencing decision making is an aim, there are several ways to go about it. This was explained in the first section of this chapter, and is worth repeating to enhance the importance of collaboration when the goal itself is to be heard by the decision makers. Personal relationships have a great influence on how the CSOs and the government collaborate. It has repeatedly been stated that personal contacts are the most important way to generate influence. Collaboration seems to work excellently as long as there are personal acquaintances with officials or bureaucrats that are willing to support the ideas represented to them. Rotation of officials was additionally mentioned as a factor influencing good or bad relationships, as the personal contact dissolves when somebody new enters a position. With some officials collaborating is easy, with others it is difficult. Prior civil society contacts that enter governmental institutions make communication easier for CSOs that try to get their issues acknowledged. In this way, it is a great benefit to civil society in Murmansk to have a leader of the public relations office with a long history in the CWKP network.

The informal pathways of communication between Russian CSOs and authorities are so strong that they intertwine with the formal channels. Not all organisations are invited to hearings because they invite *persons* and not organisations, I was told. Hearings are a new kind of formal communication that does not seem to be working too well. A sentence that was frequently repeated was: 'We find out about public hearings too late.' CSOs seem to

be less interested in public hearings in Russia than in Norway, perhaps as a natural consequence of the limited effect of Russian hearings. Another explanation may be that formalised Russian hearings are a relatively new phenomenon, which might still be suffering under a lack of comprehension and acceptance by both CSO actors and the authorities. Working groups established by authorities seem to be more common as a forum for formal advice on issues from civil society actors to the decision makers.

Lobbying is a term that not all Russian interviewees were familiar with. Some answered in the questionnaire that the organisation did not perform any kind of lobbying, before explaining how they attract the attention of representatives of legislative and executive bodies to their issues. ‘Invitations to meetings’ are more commonly used as a way of expressing such interaction. Russian CSOs consequently separate representatives of regional and local authorities from politicians, who are seen as less important and without actual power. Therefore, the CSOs rarely invite politicians to meetings. In a couple of cases this tendency had been picked up by the Norwegian partner, and a change in practice had been encouraged. At the end of the interview with the disabled children’s NGO Zabota, my attention was resolutely drawn to this influence.

I hope that you have understood that thanks to them [NFU] we are learning to pay attention to the political underlining. It’s like a political ABC course between us and the authorities!
(Sedovina 2007 [interview])

5.3.4 Conclusion to H3

A high level of collaboration between civil society and local as well as regional authorities is demonstrated in most cases. Cases where collaboration with authorities is good also show successful projects, often as consequence of this collaboration. Garant, Rassvet, Briges of Mercy, PiM, the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and North Norway’s Diaconal Foundation (NND) are all examples of this. There are also some deviant cases that have experienced recently low level of collaboration with Russian authorities because

of their agendas, such as Bellona and the FNE (that has been associated with the orange revolution in Ukraine). Whether or not the cooperation has a direct positive influence on realisation of Norwegian-oriented agendas is also not always clear, unless the agenda itself is to collaborate with government.

The level of cooperation with authorities is furthermore not the only factor that affects realisation of goals. In most cases, internal problems in the organisations or between the partners in the project themselves prevent the best results, e.g. because of language and communication problems, the success or failure of further fundraising, practical obstacles such as the visa regime and general corruption, etc. All these variables interact on the success of a project, and based on my data, it is not possible to evaluate the effect of these variables separately from the effect of collaboration with authorities. Nevertheless, I consider H3 to be relevant for the majority of the cases studied in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk within the social aid related subjects. ENGOs, and CSOs with agendas in opposition to Russian government's politics, such as the FNE, are the deviant cases that cause a partial rejection of H3.

Finally, the inevitable complexity of how goals are reached, together with deviant cases and the uncertain effect of cooperation on Norwegian-oriented agendas, contribute to the rejection of H3: in North-West Russia a high level of cooperation between regional/local authorities and CSOs does not have a demonstrably positive influence on the realisation of Norwegian-oriented agendas.

5.4 Chapter reflections

H1 has been confirmed by data showing that Norwegian assistance to CSOs operating in North-West Russia does indeed encourage the CSOs to pursue short-term benefits over long-term development. This verification must, however, be seen in a project timeframe. The reason for incentives for short-term benefits is not the activists' motivation for their work but rather the practical necessities of everyday life and activity. Income, equipment,

office space, internal seminars and demanded reports are necessary components for managing organisational activity. Most of the Norwegian partners seem to agree on this need and give funding for short-term goals to reach the true objectives with time. According to the theory presented in chapter 2.4.1, foreign aid contributes to creating ‘vertical, institutionalized and isolated (although well-funded) civil community’ (Henderson 2002:140), where the preference of short-term benefits over long-term development ultimately hinders rather than facilitates civic development (*ibid.*:141). Henderson does not emphasise the partnership aspect of funding and thus long-term goals of strengthening the Russian organisation and its influence on local and regional political decision-making over time is not taken into account. My research adds the importance of partnerships that are stable over time as a positive contribution to encouraging civic development in North-West Russia.

The prior research that generated H2 in 2.4.2 found that even though foreign donors invest heavily in communication networks among Russian CSOs, the communication is mostly simple information exchange and not concrete collaboration (Sundstrom 2006). This seems to be the general trend in my research too, even though there are more developed networks as well, especially between the ENGOS. Other theory presented in 2.4.2 added the aspect of the “new elite of civic activists” (Henderson 2002:157) and the creation of new cleavages within an initially weak CSO community due to foreign funding (Schmidt 2005a:28). I could not find enough evidence to confirm these aspects in North-West Russia, although some CSO competition was revealed by Norwegian partners. It was in one case confirmed that competitiveness made a group split up and a former group member established her own organisation and a separate partnership with another Norwegian CSO. It is, however, highly uncertain if grants were the trigger that provided an incentive for different factions of the organisation to split up.

H2 had to be rejected due to scarce evidence, but interesting further questions came out of the initial assumption. Norwegian influence can make Russian CSOs alter organisational structure, but this is by far not the only motivation for restructuring the organisation. At

least three members are required to be a member based NGO in Russia, which again is a requirement to register as an NGO. Do three persons form a member base? Bellona Murmansk has six members, and is a member based NGO. In Norway the Bellona *Foundation* is just that – a foundation with no members. Who forces the Russian organisations to transform into structures that might seem misplaced? Demands and influences from Russian authorities are also important to consider when trying to understand the mosaic of relationships affecting the development of civil society.

H3 was also rejected, even though data confirmed the main assumptions of the theory presented in 2.4.3, that foreign donors and the Russian CSOs are more likely to succeed with their long-term goals in a region where the authorities are supportive of a strong and fairly independent civil society sector (Sundstrom 2006). I find reason to wonder if there are any negative consequences of supportive authorities. In 5.1.2 I put forward the observation that efforts to develop civil society's horizontal ties seem to be developed by the regional government in Murmansk, that sets up CSO meetings. Can civil society networks be effective when they are built on authorities' will to unite? If this is the only foundation, the network would have no internal trust and reciprocity, but rather rest on implemented structures. In this way it resembles the Civic Chamber's top-down instead of horizontally organised construction. This said, even if the networks are established and initiated from outside, they are still used for internal purposes and can thus strengthen the cooperation between CSOs. The ultimate question is if such networks have a lasting effect.

An additional interesting aspect with CSO-government interaction is that it is more likely to get ideas realised through contacts in the administrations. This makes personal relationships essential, like they were in the Soviet times with 'opportunistic individualism' and *blat*, and in the 1990s 'new Russian individualism' (see 2.2). If H3 were correct, Norwegian organisations looking for partners should go for the Russian organisations that already have established good contact with the government. As seen in 5.1, there was not much emphasis on this criterion from the Norwegian organisations.

Why is this not emphasised? After all, cooperation with government is important for many Norwegian CSOs that try to influence politics.

The explanation is likely complex. Firstly, a majority of the Norwegian interviewees understand civil society as something separate from government. Accordingly, a strong civil society has the ability to affect authorities, and not be affected by them. There is an emphasis on a fundamental independence, reflecting the Norwegian debate about the state-CSO relationships in the Norwegian Model. Secondly, there is an ambiguous attitude towards the intentions of Russian authorities; the political situation is seen as developing in a less democratic direction. However, for liberal democracy to work there is a need for interaction with government.

Although, what kind of interaction is it when one party, i.e. the authorities, has the power to decide the outcome at all times? Perhaps the characteristic of cooperation on a high level is that interests of authorities and CSOs overlap, and thus there can be a dialogue and realisation of *common* goals that might fit in some agenda. Greater official support for social aid focussed CSOs than for ENGOs can be an indicator of such an assumption. In this scenario government actors' "key cards" must also have overlapping patterns with the key cards of the Russian and Norwegian CSO actors if an influential civil society is to develop from Norwegian support to North-West Russian CSOs. The influences of Norwegian democracy promotion discussed in this analysis can easily seem scarce in this big picture. What the Norwegian efforts really amount to will be the topic of the next and final chapter.

6. Conclusions from a crossing

This final chapter is dedicated to the core question of how Norwegian democracy promotion influences the advocates of democratic development, in the form of CSOs, in North-West Russia. Where has this question led me? It has been a journey starting with the theoretical introduction of civil society's role in democratic development, heading on through Russian transition and democratic history to foreign actors' involvement therein, eventually ending up with Norwegian High North strategies and Norwegian influence on civil society actors operating in North-West Russia. The conclusions and questions presented in the following are the ultimate results of this crossing.

6.1 Norwegian influence

What are the results of the Norwegian policy of promoting democracy through funding CSOs? First and foremost there are influences on cross-border partnerships and so-called people-to-people cooperation. The partnerships between Russian and Norwegian CSOs seem stable over time, although project grants are only given on annual basis. The partners elaborate various projects in cooperation, and Norwegian funding is largely responsible for the existence of many of these. Russian CSOs are developed and even established through Norwegian funding, based on mutual ideals of society's development, but also on Norwegian preconditions and government strategy.

Furthermore, effects of funding rub off on the relationship between regional/local authorities and the CSOs. Influence can be enhanced if Russian CSOs use Norwegian-oriented agendas to demonstrate opportunities for social policy of which Russian authorities approve. Norwegian funding is, however, not always positively perceived by the governors and majors. It has also been seen as intrusion and CSOs that are collaborating closely with Norwegians can end up with accusations of being spies or simply condescendingly called "Norwegian representatives". In so far as Norwegian

funding for CSOs is perceived as undesirable by the authorities, Norwegian influence can actually initiate Russian resistance against cross-border influence. If the Russian officials replace foreign support, the negative reactions against Norwegian intervention could in fact trigger the further development of civil society in North-West Russia. Foreign supported Russian CSOs create a demand for financial aid by the temporary structures of supply – a reverse of the logic that demand generates supply. In such a case, the structures of sponsorship may remain in North-West Russia even if the foreign supporters pull out.

Norwegian commitment to Russian CSOs is limited in time as well as resources, and the partners on both sides of the border seem to be aware of this. The Norwegians often have in mind to support the Russian organisation until it has the strength and influence it needs to stand on its own and create a support base in its community. Mostly this remains a goal for the future, and influence from Norwegian partners instead takes the form of creating a *demand* for such a support base, and for continued funding. In the cases where local support bases seem to be reached, the Norwegian CSOs pull back more and more of their original support. The triangle of cooperation between the youth ENGOs NU, PiM and Aetas is an outstanding example of this, a result of a successful “organisation building programme”. The Russian organisations adopted the democratic model from NU and are pleased with the structure. On a more preliminary note, Troms Red Cross is still trying to convince their Red Cross partner in Murmansk that a democratic structure is a good idea.

Overall the results of Norwegian democracy promotion through funding of CSOs are not outstanding or even noticeable for most people in Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, since the CSOs do not seem to have a great impact on the society in which they operate. Civil society is weak partly because of the low popular participation. Broader public participation is required, but the projects mainly seem to focus on the government-CSO relations or on social aid and interests within a very limited group of the population. Broadening participation through membership does, however, not seem to be a popular solution for Russian CSOs which also experience public resentment towards such approaches, and thus quit looking for members when they reach the state required

“number three” and may register as an NGO. Norwegian models do not always synchronise well with Russian society. Member bases do not have to lead to more participation in civil society. With times of forced “voluntary” participation in organisations during communist rule fresh in mind, member bases can also have the contrary effect and scare slightly sceptical people off.

Is the cross-border collaboration in any way significant for the development of a civil society and ultimately for a deeper democratic development in North-West Russia? According to the initial theoretical model of Freres (1999) strengthening civil society by ways of capacity building, civil education and other mechanisms would lead to empowerment and improve participation and ultimately give a deeper democracy, which in turn would positively influence civil society. Since my main data are subjective, I can show only to the CSO actors’ views of themselves, their situations and surroundings. These views draw a contradictory picture: both Norwegian and Russian CSOs have confidence in themselves when it comes to their role as civil society’s advocates for democratic rights and participation, but the Russian actors simultaneously regularly express disbelief in their own empowerment and stress popular apathy. Some even reject the idea of having a real civil society, since there is so little popular participation. It is difficult to argue that the partnerships and the funded projects have resulted in a deeper participatory democracy when the actors themselves doubt the effect their approaches have both on authorities and – on the other end of their target group – on the wider population.

The Russian CSOs nevertheless emphasise that they have learned from the Norwegians to become more self-confident and not shy away from confrontations with the authorities. Persistent CSOs have focused on issues previously taboo in Russia, such as mental disabilities, and have changed society’s views on their subjects. The new openness in Russian society that several of the interviewees have referred to is intertwined with the openness of Russian pioneer civil society groups that had experienced a different reality through foreign partners. As a part of this tendency, some of the CSOs are starting to take

advantage of media publicity, by following Norwegian ways of “taking action” and giving statements, which the local TV or radio station then transmits to a local audience. Above all ENGOS and women’s rights groups take this approach. The Russian CSO representatives have an optimism and indisputable go-ahead spirit despite the negative opinion they have on the state of civil society in general.

This said, I do not wish to exaggerate the impact of cross-border collaborations on civil society development. Mostly it seems that the greatest impact, with the more long-term success, is on ENGOS and equality/women’s movements – subjects of importance in Norwegian society. Yet in Russian society these issues do not have tremendous popular support. And yet the issues have clearly made their way into Russian society through outside influence with the opening of the Russian borders. In my data all the ENGOS except Aetas were started by Norwegian initiative, so to speak, built from scratch by Norwegian ENGOS. Of course there was a sentiment of environmentalism in North-West Russia with which the people who founded these ENGOS were willing to join forces. Ecology in Russia has been and still is seen as a field for experts, and “common” people were deemed unable to engage with such specialist fields. This is slightly changing with the grassroots ENGOS. In a cross-border cooperation perspective, it is interesting that a large majority of the partnerships examined here were initiated by Norwegian CSOs or individuals. In this light it is inevitable to wonder from which seeds the Russian ENGO grassroots sprouted.

6.1.1 Cross-border civil society

In 2.4.2 I expressed a wish to find out if the tendency of weak CSO networking still seemed to apply, or if communication between CSOs in North-West Russia now are part of a more robust collaboration. My findings strongly indicate that networking is under-prioritised and that horizontal ties between CSOs with different issue areas still are generally weak, except for CSOs that work within the same focus areas. Furthermore, CSOs that cooperate with the same foreign partner tend to find each other and develop a

closer cooperation. An example is the partnership between Aetas in Arkhangelsk and PiM in Murmansk that was generated by their common cooperation with NU.

This tendency of generating networks exists on both sides of the border. Thus, networking effects of cross-border partnerships rub off on Norwegian actors, as they find new partners in Norway that share views and interests in collaboration with Russia. For example did NND find new partners in Norway through a common interest in working with disabled children in Arkhangelsk. Troms Red Cross also expanded its network regionally in Troms as a side effect of the project cooperation with Murmansk Red Cross, as did KUN in Nordland in its cross-border women network. The Barents Cooperation also facilitates contact and generates interaction between regional and local actors as well as between Russian and Norwegian actors. Civil society consequently develops in Norway due to project collaboration with Russia. In this sense civic networking based on international important issues, like human rights, extends beyond geographic borders and may create a larger cross-border civil society.

6.2 Crossing ideas and values

Foreign ideas seem to grow as time in collaboration goes by, even in organisations that emphasize awareness of socio-cultural differences. Ideas cross over in both directions, I have been told. But do they really? In light of H2 I discussed Norwegian-oriented agendas that can develop when Russian CSOs collaborate with Norwegian partners. Are there also Russian-oriented agendas developing in Norwegian CSOs? Russian attitudes do not seem to rub off on the Norwegians to the same degree. Norwegian actors mention that they learn from the Russians about effectiveness and cultural values, and main grant givers stress that the cultural interaction is a two-way stream (Nilsen 2007 [interview]). My impression is that the main stream flows from the Norwegians without a visible counter-torrent. This forces me to ask if crossing the civic frontiers entails more of a substitution than exchange for the Russian actors.

On which understanding of democracy and civil society do Norwegians base their funding of Russian civil society? The main pattern I have found is that Norwegian actors who depend on government funding apply criteria for their Russian partners in accordance with the High North policy and Project Cooperation guidelines. Russian federal government has recently (April 2007) formulated a response to the Norwegian High North strategy, but the content of this document is yet (May 2007) to be made publicly available. It would be highly interesting to compare the content of the Norwegian and Russian documents, especially regarding a Russian response to Norwegian democracy considerations.

According to the analysis made here, Russian and Norwegian values and perceptions of what is important in a democratic society are equal in some areas, especially on the connection between civil society and democratic rights. Russian actors do, however, emphasise what they see as problems of society, i.e. a weak civil society: people's passivity in society due to authoritarian mentality, lack of popular support for CSOs, etc. It is clear that a certain understanding of post-communist and Russian mentality and society is required to understand the underlying challenges in need of attention.

Social differences due to customs, history and culture can have great impact on the success of Norwegian CSOs' work in Russia. For instance, personal relationships mean a great deal in all levels of interaction in Russian society. This is a phenomenon that the Norwegians are also familiar with, but do not emphasise as a criterion of success to the same degree that the Russians do. Likewise the term "political" is often said with a bitter aftertaste by Russian CSOs, whereas Norwegians feel that "political" awareness is a positively charged description of their CSO's commitment. Furthermore, the Norwegians associate a horizontally connected civil society with a strong civil society – but do the Russians? Not always. Developing civil society might well be the long term objective for all, but networking is rarely an explicit goal for the Russian CSOs.

Although the idea of liberal democracy is often perceived as universal by its promoters, the civil society that is exposed to this idea also has a local mentality that might not be receptive of all aspects of liberal democracy. Norwegian goals of civil society development in North-West Russia tend to be based on a Norwegian agenda that is mostly perceived by the Norwegians as a superior alternative to “outdated” Russian perceptions of e.g. gender equality, opportunities for mentally disabled, indigenous peoples’ rights etc. Norwegian ideas and norms are even frequently seen as universal. Russian CSOs that cooperate with Norwegians are as demonstrated affected by this, and adopt Norwegian-oriented agendas early on. In financially and influentially unbalanced relationships Norwegian partners should remember that it is important not to alienate CSO goals from the larger Russian society that they ultimately hope will embrace their promoted objectives.

6.3 Recommendations

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate the regional democracy enhancing role that Norway takes on in its High North policy, and its traceable influences in North-West Russia. It is important for a successful development of the democracy aspect in this policy to learn more about the impact that so-called democracy promotion has both on Russian and Norwegian civil society. I have suggested that Russian-Norwegian CSO cooperation influences both Norwegian as well as Russian civil society, although the former to a smaller degree. It would be interesting for future research to challenge this assumption and investigate the actual influences of Russian values and policies on Norwegian civil society. For now, based on the evidence presented in this thesis, I have two suggestions: One for the CSOs’ path ahead towards a more influential civil society in North-West Russia and another for future policy development of Norwegian funding.

Primarily, CSO actors in my study express a constant need for both foreign and Russian support for wide-ranging system changes in addition to the limited annual projects.

Norwegian grants and cooperation can never improve the internal developments towards more liberal democracy if both the Russian public and the authorities do not agree with such system changes. In this perspective, collaborating with the authorities as well as with CSOs becomes imperative for Norwegian CSO actors who aim to influence the direction of democracy development in Russia. Norwegian partners should strongly emphasise the importance of cooperating with regional and local authorities, especially through personal contacts, to enhance acceptance of and stability for North-West Russian CSOs and their work in society.

Secondly, funding is seen as too short-term. The financial insecurity connected with the annual grant cycle does not enhance a feeling of stability in the third sector. Norwegian civil society support to North-West Russian CSOs should be based on more predictability and continuity, which would benefit the CSOs' credibility in Russian society. It is obvious that the trend of project-based funding is not the preferred manner of organising civil society support neither for Norwegian nor Russian CSOs. Long-term development of civil society can never be achieved through one single project, but it can surely prove rewarding to organise a longer programme or partnership. Thus, it is not so much the short-term project goals that are up against long-term development, as assumed in H1, but rather the project timeframe itself. A longer term perspective should be taken in by the Norwegian funders, so that project support can really be directed towards a long-term development of civil society and its corresponding participant democracy.

Appendix A: The CSOs and the Barents Secretariat

ENGOS

Nature and Youth/Priroda i Molodezh (PiM), Murmansk city.⁴⁵

Arkhangelsk Regional Youth Environmental Organisation (Aetas), Arkhangelsk city.

Kola Environmental Centre "GAIA" Apatity; Apatity Environmental Centre (Gaia), Apatity/Murmansk.

Friends of the Earth/Norges Naturvernforbund (NNF), Oslo.

Nature and Youth/Natur og Ungdom (NU), Oslo.

Bellona Murmansk, Murmansk city.

Indigenous peoples groups

Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East (RAIPON), Moscow.

Working group of Indigenous Peoples (WGIP/BIPO), Murmansk city.

The Sami Mission, Lavozero/Murmansk.

Press

Barents Press Russia, Murmansk city.

Norwegian Local Radio Association/Norges Lokalradioforbund (NLF), Oslo.

Social justice/equality rights

Arkhangelsk regional voluntary organisation for children's rights and care for disabled children and youth Zabota (Zabota), Arkhangelsk city.

Arkhangelsk Regional Public Charitable Organization "RASSVET" (Rassvet), Arkhangelsk city.

Bridges of Mercy, Arkhangelsk city.

Feminist University of the North/Kvinneuniversitetet Nord (KUN), Steigen.

⁴⁵ The cities indicate the situation of the main or regional offices, often also the location for the interview.

Troms Red Cross, Bardufoss.

North Norway's Diaconal Foundation/Nord-Norges Diakonistiftelse (NND), Harstad.

Norwegian Peoples Aid/Norsk Folkehjelp (NPA), Murmansk city

The Norwegian Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Nordland/Norsk Forbund for Utviklingshemmede Nordland (NFU), Bodø.

Regional Charity Foundation New Beginning (New Beginning), Murmansk city.

Women's Congress of the Kola Peninsula (CWKP), Murmansk city.

Culture

The People's Academy Hålogaland/Folkeakademiet Hålogaland, Alta.

Human rights and peace

Den Norske Kalottkomité, Tromsø.

Norwegian Helsinki Committee, Oslo.

NGO support centres and grant generators

Arkhangelsk Centre for Social Technologies Garant (Garant), Arkhangelsk city.

Barents Youth Cooperation Office (BYCO), Murmansk city.

New Eurasia Foundation (FNE), Moscow.

Networking organisations

Soroptimist Kirkenes, Kirkenes.

Kirkenes Rotary Klubb, Kirkenes.

The Norwegian Barents Secretariat in Kirkenes is organised as an inter-municipal company, owned by the three northernmost Norwegian counties of Nordland, Troms and Finnmark. The company's Board has three members, one from each of the three counties. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development each have an observer in the Board. The regional offices of the Barents Secretariat included in this study are located in Murmansk city and in Arkhangelsk city, and operated by local staff.

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Russian CSOs

For introduction letter and Russian translation, see enclosed appendix F.

Practical information

1. Name of your organisation:
2. Name(s) of current and/or prior Norwegian cooperating organisation(s):
3. Theme of the project(s) you collaborate/ have collaborated on:
4. How old is your organisation?
5. How many people work in your organisation?
6. How many members does your organisation have?

The NGO's activities

7. What are the main types of projects that your organisation organises?
 - a. Do you organise seminars? *(If the answer to this question is 'no', please disregard b. and c.)*
Yes No
 - b. What are the typical themes of these seminars?
 - c. Are any of the seminars just internal within the organisation?
Yes No
8. Does your organisation arrange courses/ activities for the local population? *(If the answer to this question is 'no', please disregard a.)*
Yes No
 - a. What subjects are treated in these courses?
9. Does your organisation attend seminars/activities with other NGOs in the region?
Yes No
10. Can you mention some other NGOs operating in the region? *(If the answer to this question is 'no', please disregard a.)*
Name of other NGOs:
 - a. Do you maintain contact with these other NGOs?
Yes No

11. How much time would you say that the organisation spends on administrative work monthly (*paper work like registrations, reports, databases, and personnel administration*)?

a. Who does this kind of work? (*Everybody at parts or a specialised post?*)

12. Are there only activists or also other employees (*such as a secretary or cleaning personnel*) working in your organisation?

Funding

13. How is your organisation financed? (*By the Russian government, firms, private donors, other foreign/international donors etc.*)

14. How much time is approximately used on fund rising in a year?

15. What kind of projects does your organisation seek funding for?

16. What kind of funding have you received (*grants, money funding for projects, other*) during the last six years?

17. How long has your organisation been receiving foreign funding?

a. How long has it been receiving Norwegian funding?

18. How many applications for project funding have you done the past year?

a. How many of these were directed at Norwegian sponsors?

19. Do you cooperate with one foreign organisation or several?

20. Do you produce written reports to your Norwegian cooperating organisation or funder?

Yes No

a. How many working hours a month does your organisation spend on reporting back to your Norwegian partner on the projects in your collaboration?

b. How is this report work divided between the activists? (*several different people who take turn writing them or the same people every time?*)

21. Have you acquired technical equipment as a result of project funding?

Yes No

a. Is technical equipment something you have applied for specifically?

Yes No

The political sphere

22. What do you consider to be the most important political issues that concern your organisation?

23. Does the local/regional/federal government include your organisation in hearings on issues that concern you/ in which you have expertise?

Yes No

24. Does your organisation perform any kind of lobbying?

Yes No

25. Does your organisation invite politicians or representatives of governmental authorities on meetings etc.?

Yes No

26. Does your organisation spread information to the public about political issues?

Yes No

27. Is participating in/influencing local decision-making an aim for your organisation?

Yes No

Appendix C: Questionnaire to Norwegian CSOs

For introduction letter and Norwegian translation, see enclosed appendix F.

Practical information

1. Name of your organisation:
2. Number of members in your organisation:
3. Name(s) of Russian cooperating organisation(s):
4. Theme(s) of the project(s) you collaborate on:

Expectations

5. What does your organisation look for in a Russian partner organisation?
6. Does your organisation emphasise:
 - a. Rapid results from the partner?
Yes No
 - b. Reports/ evaluations from your partner?
Yes No
 - c. Attendance on seminars?
Yes No
 - d. Is there anything else you emphasise in the collaboration? *(please fill in)*
7. Are there any criteria for collaboration that should be fulfilled in advance by a possible project partners?
Yes No
 - a. If yes, could you mention some criteria?

Details on the collaboration

8. How did you get in contact with your Russian partner? *(If you have several, please make a selection).*
9. When did you start - and possibly end - your collaboration?
10. Would you repeat this collaboration?
Yes No
 - a. Why/Why not?

Appendix D: Interview guide for Russian CSOs

For Russian translation, see enclosed appendix F.

Introduction: Tell me about what you do and the projects in progress.

On foreign collaboration

1. How was the contact with the Norwegian organisation established? (Who took the initiative?)
2. What is important to you when you elaborate a project proposal to a foreign organisation?
3. Do you consider possible priorities of your counterpart when you make such a proposal?
4. How would you describe your relationship with your Norwegian collaborating organisation?
5. Can you mention some challenges that you have encountered in this collaboration?
 - a. What would in your view be possible ways of dealing with such challenges?
6. How do you feel that the process of soliciting funding affects you? (*Is it straining, time consuming etc?*)
7. What do you think of foreign funding of Russian NGOs in general?
 - a. Of Norwegian funding in particular?

On understanding of democracy

8. What do you understand as “civil society”?
 - a. Does your organisation emphasise development of civil society?
 - b. Why?
9. If local operation: What norms exist for civil activity in your local society?
11. How would you define “democratic rights”?
12. In what ways do such rights concern your organisation?
13. What effects do you think that the project in question (*reference to the project*) might have on the development of an active civil sphere in your region?
14. In your opinion, how are democratic attitudes developing in the region?
 - a. In Russia in general?
15. Do you feel that your organisation plays a part in creating democratic awareness?

16. How do you consider your influence on local political decision-making, for instance on...?

17. How do you and the local/regional/federal government communicate? (*Through protest/ instructions/ institutionalised forms of dialogue? Other forms?*)

18. How would you describe your organisation's relationship with the other NGOs in the area?

If the answer to question 10 in the questionnaire is 'yes', ask 19. and 20.:

19. Do you collaborate with any of these NGOs?

- a. What do you collaborate on?
- b. How would you characterise the collaboration on the latest project you did with this organisation?
- c. Would you collaborate with them again?
- d. Why/ why not?

20. Can you mention other NGOs in the region that are also collaborating with foreign organisations?

- a. Do you know if they also seek funding for civil society projects?
- b. Do you feel that you compete with these organisations for the same foreign funding?

On the NGO's conditions

21. How would you characterise the importance of administrative work in your organisation?

22. How would you characterise the level of salaries in your organisation? (*Are you content/discontent with the level?*)

23. To what extent is foreign funding used to pay the activists' salary?

23. Finally - if you feel that there are more topics of relevance that we haven't touched upon in this interview, please feel free to comment on this now.

Appendix E: Interview guide for Norwegian CSOs

For Norwegian translation, see enclosed appendix F.

1. Does your organisation focus on particular types of organisations in Russia? What kinds?
 - a. Do you focus on particular areas or regions in Russia? Which ones?
2. How would you describe your relationship with your Russian partner?
 - a. How would you say that the cooperation has developed over time?
 - b. What does your organisation expect from the collaboration?
3. Can you mention some challenges that you have encountered in this collaboration?
 - a. What would in your view be possible ways to deal with such challenges?
4. What do you understand as “civil society”?
 - a. What does your organisation emphasise in the development of civil society?
 - b. Why?
 - c. Would you emphasise anything in particular in Russian civil society?
5. What norms exist for civil activity in your local society?
6. How would you define “democratic rights”?
7. In what way do such rights concern to your organisation?
8. What effects do you think that this collaboration project can have on the development of an active civil sphere in the region?
9. Do you feel that your organisation plays a part in creating democratic awareness?
10. In your opinion, how are democratic attitudes developing in the Russian part of the Barents region?
11. How are democratic attitudes developing in Russia in general?
12. Have you dealt with other institutions in Russian society?
 - a. Which ones?
 - b. Experiences from such contact?
13. How have changes in the Russian society affected the project collaboration?
14. Finally - if you feel there are more topics of relevance that we haven't touched upon in this interview, please feel free to comment on this now.

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